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Modi to take oath as PM again on Sunday

Prez invites Modi to form govt at Centre after BJP and NDA allies choose him as leader

President Droupadi Murmu receives a letter stating BJP leader Narendra Modi as the leader of the Parliamentary Party by an NDA delegation at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Narendra Modi will take oath as the prime minister for a third consecutive term on Sunday evening as President Droupadi Murmu has invited him to form the government.

Murmu appointed Modi as the prime minister-designate on Friday after BJP Chief JP Nadda handed her a letter on Modi's election as the leader of the BJP Parliamentary Party and NDA leaders submitted their letters of support.

She will administer the oath of office and secrecy to Modi and other members of the Union Council of Ministers at 7.15 pm on Sunday at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the communique said. Murmu handed over the letter of appointment to Modi, who called on her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Modi said the Rashtrapati Bhavan will work out the details of the oath-taking ceremony on Sunday, by when he would hand over the list of the Council of Ministers to her.

Narendra Modi pays respects to the Constitution at NDA meeting in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Modi said he would strive to ensure unanimity in all decisions of his next government and asserted that the NDA is an organic alliance committed to the principle of 'nation first'.

Chosen by the BJP-led NDA as its leader to become prime minister for the third time, Modi also said the NDA in the next 10 years will focus on good governance, development, quality of life and minimum interference in the lives of common citizens.

Modi also urged NDA MPs not to fall prey to hoaxes about ministries and portfolios and claimed the "INDI Alliance" could also indulge in spreading "fake news" about such issues.

Addressing a meeting of the NDA Parliamentary Party, Modi said he did not find much truth in what was being aired on TV in the last couple of days. Modi said "INDI alliance" parties have already started saying they came together only for the Lok Sabha polls. Such an approach showed their character, hunger for power, he said. "For me the NDA stands for New India, Developed India, Aspirational India," he said.

Taking a dig at the Congress, he said the Opposition party could not even touch the 100 seats mark, and that their total seats in the last three LS polls were fewer than the BJP's tally in this election alone.

—PTI

Balance regional hopes with nat'l interests: Naidu

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Key BJP allies -- TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) Supremo Nitish Kumar -- on Friday endorsed Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the leader of the National Democratic Alliance with a message to balance regional aspirations and national interests.

Speaking at the NDA Parliamentary Party meeting here, BJP allies JD(S) leader HD Kumarswamy, Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde, NCP chief Ajit Pawar, HAM(S) chief Jitan Ram Manjhi among others supported the proposal moved by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to elect Modi as the leader of the NDA.

> "This is a very good opportunity for India, if you miss it now, we will miss forever," Naidu said on Friday at NDA meeting.

"Balancing regional aspirations and national interests must run parallelly while ensuring holistic development for all strata of society," Naidu said. Naidu said Modi's rallies in Andhra Pradesh helped the TDP win 16 seats in the Lok Sabha elections. Modi is the "right leader at the right time" for India as he affirmed TDP's support to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on Friday. Naidu also proposed the name of Narendra Modi for the post of Prime Minister highlighting his vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, and Viksit Bharat and urged to never miss the 'good opportunity for India.'

"This is a very good opportunity for India, if you miss it now, we will miss forever. That is where we are having a wonderful opportunity," Naidu said while addressing the NDA MPs meeting at the Samvidhan Sadan.

—PTI

INDIA bloc would have never worked for nation: Nitish

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Days after Lok Sabha poll outcome, JD(U) Chief Nitish Kumar on Friday lashed out at the INDIA bloc claiming that the latter never worked for the country.

Addressing the parliamentary meeting of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Parliament here in the national capital, Kumar said that the country will progress under the leadership of Narendra Modi.

> JD(U) Chief Nitish Kumar on Friday lashed out at the INDIA bloc claiming that the latter never worked for the country.

"Agli baar jab aap aaiye toh kuch log jo idhar udhar jeet gaya hai, agli baar sab haarega. Humko poora bharosa hai (Those who have won this time will lose the next elections. I'm confident about it). They never worked for the nation. They never served the country. The country will progress under your (Modi) leadership" said Kumar.

Modi and the other leaders at the meeting could not stop laughing at the jibe of Kumar, key founder-member of INDIA bloc in 2023 had switched sides to BJP. He further in his remarks at the NDA meeting affirmed his support towards Modi stating, "All the pending works of Bihar will be done. It is a very good thing that all of us have come together and we will all work together with you (Modi). You will be swearing in as the Prime Minister on Sunday, but I wanted you to do it today itself. Whenever you take the oath, we will be with you...We will all work together under your leadership..." Kumar has also backed the proposal of naming Modi as the Prime Minister. *—PTI*

30 monkeys killed in Chikkamagaluru

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 7 JUNE

Thirty monkeys were found dead under mysterious circumstances in Dyavana village, NR Pura taluk of Chikkamagaluru district on Friday. The monkeys were found dead on the side of the road, with multiple injuries suggesting a brutal attack. According to reports, the monkeys were killed by ingesting bananas laced with an anesthetic, followed by blunt force trauma to the head.The dead included 16 males, 14 females, and four cubs. Similaryly, another 30 monkeys' corpse who has bled to death from similar head wounds were found. The matter came to light on Friday when a forest department staff member found the bodies of monkeys in the forest area. *—Salar News*

Kannada must on nameboards: M'luru civic body

MANGALURU, 7 JUNE

Commissioner of Mangaluru City Corporation has warned commercial establishments in the city that do not display nameboards written in Kannada, stating that they would have to face action as strict as cancellation of their licences. In a directive sent to all commercial, industrial and business enterprises, trusts, counselling centres, hospitals, laboratories, entertainment centres and hotels on Friday, Corporation Commissioner Anand C L has directed that Kannada letters must cover 60 per cent of the space on the nameboards. *—PTI*

CBI files final chargesheet against Lalu in land scam

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

CBI on Friday filed its final chargesheet against former railway minister Lalu Prasad in connection with the land for jobs scam in which his family allegedly received land parcels from ineligible candidates appointed in various Railways zones as 'substitutes', the officials said. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the CBI submitted its third and final charge sheet before special judge (MP/MLA Cases) here against 78 accused, including Lalu Prasad, his wife Rabri Devi, son Tej Pratap Yadav who has been charge sheeted for the first time, daughter Hema Yadav, former OSD Bhola Yadav and one former staff member of the RJD chief, they said. Tej Pratap Yadav has been chargesheeted for the first time. *—PTI*

Naidu to be sworn in as Andhra CM on 12 June

AMARAVATI, 7 JUNE

TDP Supremo N Chandrababu Naidu will be sworn in as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh for the third time on 12 June, party sources said on Friday. Naidu will take oath of office at Kesarapalli IT Park near the Gannavaram airport.

"At 11:27 am on June 12 (Wednesday), Chandrababu Naidu will be sworn in as the Chief Minister at Kesarapalli IT Park near Gannavaram airport," the sources told PTI.

Naidu first became the chief minister nearly 30 years ago in 1995 and went on to rule till 2004 to be replaced by late YS Rajasekhar Reddy. After a decade and the bifurcation of the united state into Telangana and residual Andhra Pradesh, Naidu had emerged as the first CM of the newly carved out state in 2014. However, he lost the elections in 2019 with the chief minister's mantle taken over by YSRCP supremo YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. He will become the chief minister again after a gap of five years.

—PTI

After guns fell silent, bodies of five Naxalites in uniform and some weapons were recovered from the spot **PHOTO: PTI**

5 Naxalites killed in an encounter in Chhattisgarh

NARAYANPUR, 7 JUNE

Five Naxalites were killed and three jawans injured in an encounter in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district on Friday, police said. The gunfight took place in a forest near Gobel village in the Orchha area, where a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, a senior police official said. Personnel belonging to the police's District Reserve Guard from Narayanpur, Kondagaon, Dantewada and Bastar districts and the 45th battalion of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) were involved in the operation, he said.After guns fell silent, bodies of five Naxalites in uniform and some weapons were recovered from the spot, he said.Three jawans were also injured in the gun battle, he said, adding that further details are awaited. With this incident, 122 Naxalites have been killed in separate encounters with security forces in the state so far this year. On 23 May, seven Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security personnel in the forest on the Narayanpur-Bijapur inter-district border, while 12 were gunned down in Bijapur district on 10 May.

—PTI

RAINY DAYS LAST FOREVER

A scooterist rides in the pouring rain on JC Road in Bengaluru on Friday **PHOTO: SALAR**

U'KHAND TRAGEDY

'Blizzard led to death of trekkers'

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

"If not for the inclement weather, they all would have survived and returned home safely," said S Srivatsa, Secretary of Karnataka Mountaineering Association (KMA), capturing the shock of veteran mountaineers over the death of nine experienced trekkers of their group in Uttarakhand. A 22-member trekking team from the association began a 35-km long trek from Uttarkashi on 29 May, but nine of them lost their lives in Uttarakhand due to extreme weather, while the 13 who survived were rescued in a coordinated operation by Uttarakhand and Karnataka governments.

"This tragedy happened only due to this fatal bad weather. They were all trained and experienced trekkers. It was not tough terrain also. The terrain was accessible to any common person. Because of this inclement weather, they were caught and went into hypothermia," Srivatsa said. The group comprised physically fit, experienced trekkers in the age group of 34 to 71, he said. When the incident took place, Srivatsa himself was at the Everest base camp in Nepal and rushed to Dehradun to help coordinate the rescue. "I know each one of them personally. They all are KMA members and I have trekked a lot with them in the past but during this trek, I was in Nepal," he said. "Primarily, before going on an expedition, there are two or three mandatory local treks as a prep for physical fitness. Apart from that, we meet every Saturday. As soon as I got to know about the incident, I rushed to Dehradun. They were in complete shock, shattered and depressed. Some of them were sitting with the bodies for nearly 36 hours. It was depressing," he recalled. "When I interacted with them, they shared how because of heavy wind, their windcheater, jackets and gloves were flying and visibility was zero. So, they took shelter next to a big boulder," he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

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RBI KEEPS REPO RATE AT 6.5% FOR 8TH TIME IN A ROW

MUMBAI, 7 JUNE

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday decided to keep the policy rate unchanged for the eighth time in a row, saying it will maintain a tight vigil on inflation. The rate increase cycle was paused in April last year after six consecutive rate hikes, aggregating to 250 basis points since May 2022. Announcing the second bi-monthly monetary policy for the current financial year, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has decided to keep the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent. He said MPC will remain watchful of elevated food inflation amid the expectation of a normal monsoon.*—PTI*

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SEC 144 IN MANIPUR AFTER PROTEST OVER MAN'S DEATH

IMPHAL, 7 JUNE

The Manipur government has imposed curfew in Jiribam district for an indefinite period after people staged protests over the killing of a 59-year-old man by suspected militants, an official said on Friday. The prohibitory orders were clamped on Thursday night after locals set a few abandoned structures on fire following the recovery of the body of Soibam Saratkumar Singh. The situation remained tense but calm on Friday morning after locals demonstrated over the killing of the man.

"There is the likelihood of widespread disturbance to peace and public tranquillity or riot or an affray..because of unlawful activities of anti-social elements," the official said. *—PTI*

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Car plunges into gorge; 3 die, 1 critically injured

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 7 JUNE

Three men were killed in a car accident near Gauribidanur on Thursday. The sole survivor is critically injured. The incident occurred around midnight near Vatadahosahalli. The car, carrying four friends, was travelling from Nagaragere when the driver lost control, striking a roadside tree and plunging into a gorge. The deceased are Sridhar, 28; Venugopal, 38; and Manjunath, 37. All three were residents of Vatadahosahalli. The lone survivor, Shivakumar, is being treated at MS Ramaiah Hospital in Bengaluru. According to sources at Bescom electrical company, Venugopal and Sridhar were linemen employed there. Manjunath and Shivakumar were employees of Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited. The group visited Nagaragere for personal reasons after work. Following dinner, they were returning home when the accident occurred. The severity of the crash is evident from the car coming to rest roughly sixty feet down the ravine. The force of the impact ejected one of the front-seat passengers, whose body was discovered hanging from the tree by a passerby. —*Salar News*

Bengaluru-London non-stop AI flights from 18 August

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

Air India will launch non-stop services between Bengaluru and London Gatwick (LGW), commencing on 18 August, Bangalore International Airport Ltd, the operator of Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru, said on Friday. The new route will feature five weekly flights, providing enhanced connectivity for both business and leisure travellers, it said. "This development marks Bengaluru as the first Indian city to have direct connectivity to the two largest airports in London – Heathrow and Gatwick, reinforcing the economic and cultural ties between India and the UK," BIAL said. AI will operate Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft on this route. —*PTI*

Six arrested for bike theft, blackmailing

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

The City police arrested six individuals on Friday for bike theft, blackmail, and possession of illegal substances. The police seized one auto-rickshaw, two Royal Enfield motorcycles, a Mahindra XUV-700 car, mobile phones, and Rs 20 lakh in cash during the raid. A group of individuals allegedly robbed a resident of Soladevanahalli, stealing Rs 70,000 and his bike on 2 June. The group then planted ganja on the stolen vehicle, filmed it, and used the video to blackmail the victim. They demanded Rs 10 lakh to delete the video and took the victim's Royal Enfield bike as collateral. The team apprehended four suspects in Chikkasandra and two near Hurali Chikkanahalli on Friday. Two of the arrested were identified as rowdy sheeters with a history of absconding. —*Salar News*

APD launches 'Nurturing the Green Week' in City

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

Association of People with Disabilities on Friday launched their week-long environmental initiative, 'Nurturing the Green Week' at APD Horticulture Training Centre in the City. Senthil Kumar, CEO of APD told Salar News that Rakesh Kumar (CSR Lead, ABB India) and Dhenuka Srinivasan (Environment & Sustainability Manager, ABB India), inaugurated the event. Children from a local government school had the opportunity to explore and learn about exotic plants on display. This week will be filled with activities, exhibition and informative sessions. The exhibition includes 300 varieties of flora, such as herbal, medicinal, aromatic, ornamental, exotic plants and gardening products. These plants highlights the talent of specially abled individuals. This initiative is to support the disabled. —*Salar News*

Rahul Gandhi gets bail in defamation case

BJP State unit filed a case over 'defamatory' ads published ahead of Assembly polls last year

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at a meeting of new MPs and losing candidates, in Bengaluru on Friday ***PHOTO: SALAR***

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday was granted bail by a special court here in connection with a case filed by BJP's Karnataka unit for issuing "defamatory" advertisements in mainstream newspapers.

The advertisement ahead of the Assembly polls last year accused the then BJP government in the State of indulging in large-scale corruption during its 2019-2023 rule.

The court had on 1 June granted bail to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who is also the State Congress chief, after they appeared before it in connection with the defamation case.

Gandhi apologised to the court on Friday for seeking an exemption from personal appearance in the last two hearings. The court accepted his apology and granted him bail on a surety of Rs 75 lakh.

Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar were also present in the court along with Gandhi.

BJP had in its complaint filed in June 2023 alleged that false and reckless allegations were made in the advertisements issued by the accused people on 5 May, 2023 in all the mainstream newspapers in Karnataka during campaigning for the Assembly polls, under the title "Corruption rate card", and "40 per cent Commission Sarkara (government)". It was alleged in the complaint that the advertisements were issued by Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee through Shivakumar, in his capacity as its president and by Siddaramaiah, as the then Leader of Opposition in Legislative Assembly. Gandhi had put up a post of this "defamatory advertisement" on his social media 'X' account, it said.

In a post on 'X' after Gandhi personally appeared before the court, BJP said: "Accused out on bail in the National Herald case, Mr. @RahulGandhi, you are welcome to Namma Bengaluru. We also invite you to experience the consequences of Indian laws for all the misleading and defamatory advertisements you used against our leaders here in Karnataka, which you have failed to prove till today." —*PTI*

Shivakumar calls BJP's defamation case 'bogus'

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar called the defamation suit filed by the Karnataka BJP unit against him, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi a "bogus case".

Speaking to ANI on Friday on the case, Shivakumar said to respect the court, Rahul Gandhi attended the court on Friday.

BJP in the complaint had alleged that the advertisements in local newspapers and "false campaigning" by Congress ahead of the 2023 State Assembly elections damaged BJP's image. The case was registered against Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC), Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar and Gandhi. —*PTI*

Rahul's meet to cover up corp scam, says BJP

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

State BJP has alleged that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's meeting at KPCC office here on Friday was intended to cover up the Rs 187 crore scam at Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Limited. The meeting might have been called to seek the resignation of Chief Minister, BJP said.

On 25 May, a meeting was held in the office of Medical Education Minister Sharanprakash Patil, involving Minister Nagendra and Corporation Chairman-MLA Basavanagowda Daddal, the BJP claimed. BJP said they would submit the proof in an affidavit to the court to preserve the CCTV footage of that meeting.

BJP leader CN Ashwath Narayan on Friday accused the Congress government of looting funds meant for Dalit community. A large network was involved in the scam and everyone seemed to have benefited from it, he said. He criticised the government for securing Nagendra's resignation in a "ritualistic manner" without providing any answers, suggesting that he should have been arrested.

He questioned how money could be transferred from the State treasury without the involvement and consent of the government.

JD(S) Mandya MP HD Kumaraswamy alleged that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar were involved in the scam. "Both CM and DCM are aware of the scam and the resignation of ST Welfare Minister B Nagendra alone is insufficient," he said on Friday. —*Salar News*

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with Mansoor Ali Khan, AICC Secretary in-charge of Telengana, in Bengaluru on Friday. ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Rahul reviews Cong performance in Lok Sabha elections in State

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday reviewed the performance of the party in the Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka. The ruling Congress won nine seats, while BJP and JD(S), which is a part of NDA, bagged 17 and 2 seats, respectively, in the State which has a total of 28 Lok Sabha segments. Gandhi addressed the newly elected MPs and losing candidates of the party here. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his deputy DK Shivakumar, who is also party's State unit chief, and Congress General Secretary in-charge of Karnataka, Randeep Singh Surjewala were present at the meet.

Rahul asked to voice against injustice to State: DKS

Rahul advised the newly-elected MPs and also those who lost in the elections to raise their voice against injustice and indifferent attitude towards Karnataka, Shivakumar said. —*PTI*

Bhavani Revanna appears before SIT after HC direction

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

Bhavani Revanna, mother of former Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, on Friday appeared before Special Investigation Team (SIT) in connection with an abduction case following a direction from Karnataka High Court, which granted her interim anticipatory bail earlier in the day.

Bhavani is facing charges of kidnapping a woman, allegedly to help her son, who is accused of sexually abusing several women and is currently in SIT custody. She was granted interim anticipatory bail by Justice Krishna S Dixit subject to her appearing before the investigating officer of SIT by 1pm on Friday and fully cooperating with the probe.

Bhavani Revanna ***PHOTO: PTI***

The High Court has barred her from entering the jurisdictions of KR Nagar taluk in Mysuru district, and the entire Hassan district, where the alleged kidnapping of the woman, who was allegedly sexually assaulted by her son, took place. Meanwhile, the SIT has detained Bhavani's car driver in connection with the kidnapping case, sources said. —*PTI*

Bodies of 9 trekkers who died in Uttarakhand reach Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

Bodies of nine Karnataka trekkers who lost their lives in Uttarakhand due to extreme weather were flown to Bengaluru via Delhi on Friday, officials said.

A 22-member trekking team was sent by Himalayan View Trekking Agency, Maneri, on 29 May on a 35-km long trek from Uttarkashi. "Bodies of the three trekkers who lost their lives in Uttarakhand due to extreme weather conditions arrived at the Bengaluru Airport on Friday via 5.45am Indigo flight from Delhi. Government officials received the bodies and arrangements were made to transport them to their respective houses," a government official earlier said. Bodies of the remaining six trekkers arrived later, he added. Prasad, Asha Sudhakar, Padmanabha Kundapur Krishnamurthy, Sindhu Vakekalam, Vinayak Mungurwadi, Sujatha Mungurwadi, Chitra Praneet and Anita Rangappa, he said.

"All nine bodies have arrived and been handed over to respective families for final rites. With the 13 surviving people and nine bodies reaching Bengaluru, all 22 are accounted for" the official said. —*PTI*

POLL PULSE

JD(S) & BJP win 3 seats in MLC polls

MYSURU, 7 JUNE

JD(S)-BJP alliance candidates won three Legislative Council seats that went to the polls on Thursday.

The counting of votes for the three constituencies took place at Maharani College in Mysuru. JD(S)' candidate S Vivekananda secured victory in South Teachers' Constituency while SL Boje Gowda won in South West Teachers' seat. Dhananjay Sarji from BJP emerged victorious in South West Graduates' Constituency. They won based on first-preference votes.

Vivekananda won by a margin of 4,622 votes against his Congress rival Marithibbe Gowda. This marked Vivekananda's first election to the Legislative Council and ended Gowda's winning streak in four elections.

Boje Gowda secured his second term as a member of Vidhan Parishad by receiving 9,829 votes compared to his Congress competitor Dr KK Manjunath who got 4,562 votes.

Sarji won from South West Graduate Constituency by garnering 37,627 votes while his Congress opponent Ayanur Manjunath received only 13,516 votes. The rebel BJP candidate Raghupathi Bhatt was defeated with 7,039 votes.

- The counting of votes for the three constituencies took place at Maharani College in Mysuru. JD(S) candidate S Vivekananda secured victory in South Teachers' Constituency while SL Boje Gowda won in South West Teachers' seat.

It is worth noting that efforts were made to educate teachers and graduates about proper voting procedures and it was observed that invalid voting was more prevalent during this election. The invalid votes recorded 1049 in South Teachers Constituency; 821 voters in South West Teachers Constituency; and 5,115 voters in South West Graduates Constituency

The districts covered under these constituencies are Mysuru, Mandya, Hassan and Chamarajanagar. The total number of teacher voters is 20,549 out of which around 18,989 voted.

—*Salar News*

We are joining hands with NDA only, says HDK

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

JD(S) leader and former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy affirmed on Friday his party's support to Prime Minister elect Narendra Modi and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to form a "stable government."

Speaking to ANI as he arrived in the national capital to attend the NDA MPs meeting, Kumaraswamy said, "We are all with him (Modi), we are joining hands with only NDA. Not only me but the entire country has a lot of expectations from Modi regarding developments, several problems have to be solved."

"There is no demand at all. Stable government is required for the country, and for that, we are joining hands with him," he said.

On reports of demands put forth by NDA allies, the JD(S) leader said, "Ultimately, everybody will agree."

As per the sources, discussions will be held on government formation by the grand alliance. This comes after the NDA crossed the majority mark bagging 293 seats in the Lok Sabha polls. —*ANI*

'COMMUNAL HATRED'

State bans 'Hamare Baarah' film

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

Karnataka government has banned the screening of the Hindi movie 'Hamare Baarah' for at least two weeks after some Muslim organisations raised concerns.

In an order, the government stalled the release of the film and its trailer in electronic media, social media, film theatres, private television channels or other media.

The order said several Muslim organisations had appealed to the government not to allow the screening of the movie which portrays Islam in an "instigative and derogatory manner", and permitting such a film would lead to hatred between faiths and communities. The organisations said a conspiracy has been going on to target a particular faith, disturb peace and hurt the religious sentiments of Muslims.

The government banned the Hindi movie for at least two weeks after some Muslim organisations raised concerns ***PHOTO: PTI***

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition R Ashoka has voiced criticism of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's decision to ban the movie 'Hamare Baarah'. The BJP leader said on X platform: "CM @siddaramaiah's decision to ban #HamareBaarah movie in Karnataka is yet another brazen attempt to muzzle freedom of speech and expression in the state."

Questioning the motives behind the ban, the BJP leader asked who the Chief Minister and the Karnataka Congress were trying to appease with this action."There is no threat to law and order in Karnataka because of this movie, which is being screened across the country. Instead of protecting civil liberties and freedom of expression CM @siddaramaiah has yet again chosen to stand with radical elements. Shame on @INCKarnataka's regressive vote bank politics and intolerance," he said. —*Agencies*

- In an order, State government stalled the release of the film and its trailer in electronic media, social media, film theatres, private television channels or other media.

Governor accepts Minister Nagendra's resignation

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot has accepted the resignation tendered by Scheduled Tribes Welfare Minister B Nagendra with immediate effect, the Raj Bhavan said on Friday.

Nagendra quit on Thursday amid allegations of illegal transfer of money from a state-run Corporation.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had recommended to the Governor to accept the resignation, a Raj Bhavan communiqué said.

In connection with the misappropriation of funds amounting to Rs 87 crore by committing fraud through illegal transfer in Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Limited, its employee Chandrashekhar P had died by suicide and in his death note, he had seriously complained about the pressure on him from higher level to transfer the funds, the communique said.

B Nagendra faced allegations of illegal transfer of money from a State-run Corporation. ***PHOTO: PTI***

Both the state government and CBI have filed separate FIRs in this regard, it said.

Nagendra, also Youth Empowerment and Sports Minister, was allegedly involved in the fraud case of the Corporation, the communique said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Court to consider chargesheet against Kavitha on 6 July

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

A Delhi court is likely to decide on July 6 whether to take cognisance of a supplementary charge sheet filed by the CBI against BRS leader K Kavitha in the corruption case linked to the alleged excise scam. The central probe agency filed the final report before Special CBI Judge Kaveri Baweja, who posted the matter for 6 July. The judge also extended the judicial custody of Kavitha till June 21 in the case. The daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao was arrested by the CBI in Tihar Jail in April, where she was lodged after her arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case. *—PTI*

AAP suspends Nitin Tyagi over 'anti-party' activities

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

The AAP on Friday suspended former MLA Nitin Tyagi from the party for alleged "anti-party" activities during the just concluded Lok Sabha polls. In his response, Tyagi claimed the action was taken against him for "speaking the truth". In a communication to Tyagi, AAP Delhi state convener Gopal Rai said, "It has come to our notice that you have been involved in anti-party activities during the Lok Sabha Elections 2024. The party has taken a decision to suspend you from its primary membership pending disciplinary proceedings." Responding to the news, Tyagi wondered if "speaking the truth in the party has become an anti-party thing?" Sharing Rai's letter on X, Tyagi said what is anti-party is "destroying its basic ideals". *—PTI*

Defamation hearing against RaGa on 18 June

SULTANPUR, 7 JUNE

An MP-MLA court here on Friday postponed the hearing in the 2018 defamation case against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his alleged objectionable remarks targeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Gandhi's lawyer Kashi Prasad Shukla said due to the death of a lawyer, a condolence meeting was held in the court on Friday and the hearing was postponed to 18 June. The Congress leader appeared in court in the defamation case in February and he was granted bail. The complaint against Gandhi was filed by BJP leader Vijay Mishra. Last December, the court issued a warrant against Gandhi. Subsequently, the Congress leader appeared in the court, and was granted bail. *—PTI*

PS Tamang to take oath as Sikkim CM on 10 June

GANGTOK, 7 JUNE

The swearing-in ceremony of PS Tamang as Sikkim chief minister was deferred by a day and the SKM supremo will now take oath for the second term on 10 June, party leaders said on Friday. The decision to defer the swearing-in ceremony to 10 June was taken during the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) legislature party meeting, held earlier in the day at the chief minister's official residence, Mintokgang, as Tamang will visit Delhi on Sunday to attend the oath-taking ceremony of Narendra Modi as prime minister for the third time, they said. Tamang is likely to leave for New Delhi on Saturday, an SKM leader said. "Tamang and his council of ministers will now take oath on 10 June at Paljor stadium," another party leader said. During party meeting, the newly elected SKM MLAs adopted a resolution to extend the party's support to Modi. *—PTI*

People didn't vote for Modi as PM: DMK

Modi is PM due to 'borrowed benevolence': DMK mouthpiece

Senior BJP leader Narendra Modi with Bihar CM and JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar during the NDA parliamentary party meeting at Samvidhan Sadan, in New Delhi on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

CHENNAI, 7 JUNE

Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK on Friday stated that the people did not vote for Narendra Modi to rule the nation but circumstances have allowed him to become the Prime Minister on the basis of "borrowed benevolence" -- pointing to the support from NDA allies, including TDP and JD(U).

The Dravidian party's Tamil mouthpiece 'Murasoli,' in an editorial said Modi sought votes in the name of God and when that campaign did not click, he claimed that "he was god himself" but eventually he would now become the prime minister only due to the support of Telugu Desam Party leader Chandrababu Naidu and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

"Enough of making tall claims, assuring that (you will) do this and that with 400 seats and 370 seats; fulfil everyday needs of the Indian people. Create an India that is without tears and worries. That is enough," the editorial on 7 June said.

Furthermore, the daily said that although in the run up to Lok Sabha polls Modi had said that his party alone would win in 370 seats, it did not happen, and BJP could get only 240 seats. "We see with our eyes the saffron party falling into an abyss."

Although Modi said NDA would secure 400 seats, it could secure only 292 segments, the editorial further pointed out. "Modi alone should own up responsibility for a setback and defeat of this kind. It is because he thought of showcasing election victory as his own individual achievement. As it has failed, that failure is also his own individual defeat." The editorial alleged that Lok Sabha election was held in seven phases "only for Modi" as he wanted to visit all the states and constituencies so as to win and claim credit for victory in 400 seats. Hence, all the failures should be directed at him alone, it further argued. *—PTI*

Muslim reservation to continue in Andhra: TDP

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

As Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and its allies BJP and Jana Sena are gearing up to form the government in Andhra Pradesh after registering a landslide victory in the state Assembly elections, party leader K Ravindra Kumar said on Friday that the reservation provided to the Muslims will continue in the state. "We will continue that. There is no problem at all," Kumar told. TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu also asserted to preserve the Muslim quota reservation in the state contrasting BJP's assertion to not provide reservation based on religion. *—ANI*

Prez Muizzu to attend Modi's oath ceremony

MALE, 7 JUNE

Mohamed Muizzu *PHOTO: PTI*

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has accepted the invitation to attend Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony in New Delhi over the weekend, according to a media report on Friday.

News portal Edition.mv quoted its sister-publication in Dhivehi, Mihaaru News, as saying that President Muizzu will leave for New Delhi on Saturday for the ceremony accompanied by several other senior government officials.

There was no official confirmation yet from the Maldives President's Office about Muizzu's first official visit to India. Earlier on Wednesday, Muizzu had congratulated Modi and voiced his desire to work with the Indian prime minister to advance the bilateral ties. "Congratulations to Prime Minister @narendramodi and BJP and BJP-led NDA, on the success in the 2024 Indian General Election, for the third consecutive term. This marks the pro-China President's first official visit to India since assuming office on 17 November last year. The swearing-in ceremony is expected to witness the presence of leaders from neighbouring countries, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, Mauritius, and Seychelles. *—PTI*

Aaditya asks TDP, JD(U) to demand Speaker post

MUMBAI, 7 JUNE

caption *PHOTO: XXX*

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray on Friday said the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Janta Dal United (JD(U)), key to forming the next NDA government, must insist on getting Lok Sabha Speaker's post. On 'X', Thackeray claimed that the minute BJP forms a government, it will try to break the parties of its allies. "A humble suggestion to the possible allies of BJP in the newly remembered NDA. Get the post of the Speaker," he said. Thackeray also indirectly referred to the splits engineered in the Shiv Sena and NCP. As BJP has fallen short of the majority required to form a government, the support of TDP and JD(U) has become crucial for them. *—PTI*

Taiwan calls China's protest 'unjustified'

NEW DELHI/ WASHINGTON, 7 JUNE

Taiwan on Friday said China's "outrage" over a "cordial" exchange between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te is utterly unjustified as threats and intimidation never foster friendship.

The comments by the Taiwanese Foreign Ministry came a day after China protested an exchange of messages between Modi and Chingte, saying it opposes all official interactions between Taiwan and countries having diplomatic relations with Beijing.

"Taiwan remains dedicated to building partnerships with India underpinned by mutual benefit & shared values," it said. On Wednesday, Lai greeted Modi on victory in Lok Sabha polls and said was looking forward to enhancing the "fast-growing" ties between the two sides.

Lai Ching-te *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

In his response to the congratulatory message, Modi said: "Thank you @ChingteLai for your warm message. I look forward to closer ties as we work towards mutually beneficial economic and technological partnership." China considers Taiwan as its breakaway province and insists it should be unified with the mainland, by force if necessary. Taiwan, however, sees itself as completely distinct from China.

The US has also said such congratulatory messages between two foreign leaders were part of "normal course of diplomatic business". *—PTI*

ED opposes Kejriwal bail plea, cites ample evidence against him

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

ED said there is ample evidence on record to link the applicant to the commission of the offence of money laundering *PHOTO: PTI*

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) on Friday filed its response on Arvind Kejriwal's regular bail plea and said the applicant (Kejriwal) is involved in the commission of grave economic offences.

There is ample evidence on record to link the applicant to the commission of the offence of money laundering, and his release on bail would adversely affect further investigation to unearth the deep-rooted multi-layered conspiracy, the ED said.

The ED filed the reply in money laundering case related to Excise case, mentioned that accused Vinod Chauhan was responsible for the transfer of Rs 25.5 cr from Delhi to Goa which was received from Abhishek Boinpally that is a representative of the South Group who also handled cash transfer in the quid pro quo arrangement.

The examination of the digital device of Vinod Chauhan has revealed the chats revealing a close relationship between Vinod Chauhan and Arvind Kejriwal.

Vinod Chauhan's proximity is also visible from the fact that he was managing postings for officers in the Delhi Jal Board through Arvind Kejriwal. The same is evident from a chat and a screenshot of an official note from the Delhi Government which approved such a posting, the ED said.

The court on Friday deferred the arguments for 14 June, after noting that ED had served the reply copy to Arvind Kejriwal's lawyer just at 1 pm. *—ANI*

Congress Party members Vineet Punia, Kanhaiya Kumar address a press conference, in Delhi on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

Cong demands SC- monitored probe into NEET 'irregulaities'

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

The Congress on Friday demanded a high-level investigation under the Supreme Court's supervision into "irregularities" in NEET for medical courses and accused the BJP of cheating youngsters and playing with their futures. Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge said paper leaks, rigging and corruption have become an integral part of many examinations, including the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET).

"We demand that a high-level investigation should be conducted under the supervision of the Supreme Court so that our talented students appearing in NEET and other exams get justice," he added.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has denied any irregularities and grace marks for losing time at examination centres are behind the students scoring higher marks.

Jairam Ramesh, the Congress General Secretary in charge of communications, said the "scam" involving lakhs of candidates is "completely unacceptable and unforgivable". "The question is how did the students get cheated, who did it and why was this result deliberately declared on June 4 amid the noise of election results, whereas it was to be declared on 14 June?" Ramesh asked.

Gandhi, Ambedkar, Shivaji statues relocated in Parliament to ensure Oppn can't hold protests: Cong

The Congress on Friday alleged that statues of Mahatma Gandhi, BR Ambedkar and Chhatrapati Shivaji among others have been relocated within Parliament premises to ensure that Opposition parties cannot hold democratic protests, and said such "stunts" cannot save Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "unstable government" from falling.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh termed the Lok Sabha secretariat's explanation for relocating the statues as "wholly bogus", and said there has been no discussion with any political party on the matter. *—PTI*

Bibhav Kumar's bail plea gets rejected in Maliwal case

New Delhi, 7 June

A Delhi sessions court on Friday dismissed the bail application of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar, saying there was an apprehension about the accused influencing witnesses, if released. Kumar has been accused of assaulting AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal on13 May at the chief minister's residence.Kumar moved the court for bail for a second time.Judge Ekta Gauba Mann said "The investigation is at initial stage and there is fear in the mind of victim regarding her security as well as security of her family members as she is receiving continuous threats. There is also apprehension that applicant or accused Bibhav Kumar would influence the witnesses, if at liberty." *—PTI*

POWER PLAY

Andhra Pradesh BJP unit eyes cabinet berth

AMARAVATI, 7 JUNE

Buoyed by the outcome of the recent Assembly and Lok Sabha polls, the Andhra Pradesh BJP unit is seeking at least one cabinet berth at the Centre, amid reports that there will be "ample" representation from the state.

BJP sources said the state unit has already sent a message to the top brass through Shiv Prakash, national joint general secretary of the saffron party, requesting a cabinet berth for at least one Lok Sabha member of the party from the state if possible.

"This is an opportune time to expand the party in Andhra Pradesh and send a message to the masses that BJP is serious about the state.

TDP supporters celebrate the party's lead in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly polls and Lok Sabha polls, in Hyderabad *PHOTO: PTI*

A request has been sent to the senior leadership of the party," the BJP sources told PTI.

The first choice would be State BJP President D Purandeswari who won from Rajamahendravaram Lok Sabha constituency by a margin of nearly 2.40 lakh votes, defeating her nearest rival G Srinivas of YSR Congress, they said.

The saffron party has performed impressively in the state by improving its vote share to 11.28 per cent in the recent polls, winning three Lok Sabha and eight assembly seats, from a minuscule less-than-one per cent in 2019.

As part of a seat-sharing deal among NDA partners, the TDP contested 144 assembly and 17 Lok Sabha constituencies while BJP put up candidates in six Lok Sabha and 10 assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh. Janasena contested two Lok Sabha and 21 assembly seats.

The TDP won 135 seats in the assembly polls. Its allies BJP and Janasena got 8 seats and 21 seats respectively. *—PTI*

Rahul was 'man of the match' of LS polls: Tharoor

NEW DELHI, 7 JUN

caption *PHOTO: XXX*

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Friday hailed Rahul Gandhi as "the man of the match" of the Lok Sabha polls and said it would only be fitting that he takes on the mantle of the Leader of Opposition in the house.

In an interview with PTI after his fourth-straight Lok Sabha polls victory, Tharoor said the message of the mandate was that the electorate have given a "comeuppance" to BJP's "overweening arrogance" and its "my way or the high way attitude".

The former Union minister said this time the Modi-led NDA government could prove to be a 'majboor sarkaar' (helpless government) on some issues because the parties that are part of the NDA will have to agree on everything.

Tharoor said if the next Lok Sabha polls take place five years down the line, he does not see himself contesting another election for the Lower House as he believes that one needs to know when to step aside for the younger blood to come in. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Medha Patkar's sentencing reserved for 1 July

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

A court here on Friday reserved for July 1 its order on the quantum of sentence against activist Medha Patkar in a defamation case lodged against her by Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena when he headed an NGO in Gujarat.Metropolitan Magistrate Raghav Sharma reserved the order after noting that the Delhi Legal Services Authority (DLSA) submitted a victim impact report (VIR). The report is prepared after the conviction of an accused to assess the quantum of loss suffered by the victim. The offence entails a maximum punishment of simple imprisonment of up to two years or fine or both. Earlier on 24 May, the court had observed that Patkar's statements calling Saxena a "coward" and alleging his involvement in hawala transactions.—*PTI*

Himachal reports 34 diarrhoea cases, total at 286

HAMIRPUR, 7 JUNE

Thirty-four new diarrhoea cases were reported from 10 villages of Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur in a span of 24 hours, taking the total number of patients in the district to 286, an official said on Friday. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr RK Agnihotri said the 34 cases were detected till Thursday night. Of the total 286 cases, 14 patients are in hospital while 193 have been discharged. The remaining patients are getting treated at home, he told PTI.Twelve villages of Gram Panchayats Lamblu, Chamned, Gasota, Bafrin and Pandher in Hamirpur district have been reporting diarrhoea cases since last Friday. The area has a population of around 4,550.A team of the health department visited the affected villages and advised people to take proper care.—*PTI*

4 of family drown in Gujarat's Mahisagar river

ANAND, 7 JUNE

Four members of a family, including two women, drowned in Mahisagar river in Gujarat's Anand district during an outing, police said on Friday. The incident took place on Thursday evening on the outskirts of Khanpur village, a popular tourist spot during the summer season as people gather to take a dip in the waters of Mahisagar river, Khambholaj police in Anand district said in a statement. Though villagers rushed to the spot after learning about the incident, it was too late as they could only recover the bodies of the victims, the police said. The deceased were identified as Suresh Vaghela, Prakash Vaghela, Vesuben Solanki and Jyoti Vaghela. —*PTI*

Dalit sarpanch tied to tree and beaten; 1 arrested in MP

MORENA, 7 JUNE

A Dalit sarpanch was allegedly tied to a tree and beaten up by goons in Morena in Madhya Pradesh, forcing him to leave his native village, a police official said on Friday. The Koutharkalan panchayat sarpanch, in his complaint at Porsa police station on Thursday, said goons for the past two years were harassing him and wanted him to leave his post as well as hand over his dongle, containing his digital signature password, the official said. When he refused to give in to their demands, he was thrashed, said the official quoting from his complaint. "Based on the complaint of the sarpanch, a case was registered against Diwakar Singh Tomar, who has since been arrested, and his brother Pinku. Further probe into the incident is underway," said Ambah Sub Divisional Officer of Police (SDOP) Ravi Bhadoria.—*PTI*

Curfew in Manipur after protest over man's killing

Sec 144 was imposed in Jiribam after buildings were set on fire

IMPHAL, 7 JUNE

Locals had staged a protest in front of Jiribam Police Station PHOTO: PTI

The Manipur government has imposed curfew in Jiribam district for an indefinite period after people staged protests over the killing of a 59-year-old man by suspected militants, an official said on Friday.

The prohibitory orders were clamped on Thursday night after locals set a few abandoned structures on fire following the recovery of the body of Soibam Saratkumar Singh.

The situation remained tense but calm on Friday morning after locals demonstrated over the killing of the man.

"There is the likelihood of widespread disturbance to peace and public tranquillity or riot or an affray..because of unlawful activities of anti-social elements," the official said, citing the orders issued by the Office of District Magistrate Jiribam.

The local administration also prohibited "assembly of five people or more, which is likely to turn unlawful, carrying of firearms, sticks... and movement of any person outside their respective residences within the revenue jurisdiction of the district".

Singh went missing after he had gone to his farm on Thursday morning and later, his body was found with wounds made by a sharp object, a police officer said.

Locals had staged a protest in front of Jiribam Police Station, demanding that their licenced firearms taken from them in the wake of elections be returned to them after the completion of the polls.

The administration appealed to the people to maintain peace in the district.

"Jiribam district is facing a difficult time in terms of law and order, public peace and tranquillity", a notice said, adding that "an appeal is made to all sections of society...to maintain peace and calm and not succumb to any false information". The district magistrate also requested the Jiribam superintendent of police to "identify vulnerable pockets and deploy security forces to avoid unwanted incidents".

> The prohibitory orders were clamped on Thursday night after locals set a few abandoned structures on fire following the recovery of the body of Soibam Saratkumar Singh

A joint control room comprising officials of Assam Rifles, Central Reserve Police Force, Manipur Police and Indian Reserve Battalion has also been set up for quick communication among security forces in the district.

Jiribam, which has a diverse ethnic composition comprising Meiteis, Muslims, Nagas, Kukis and non-Manipuris, had so far remained unaffected by the ethnic strife which has been raging in Manipur since May last year. —*PTI*

A CISF woman constable allegedly slapped actor and BJP MP-elect Kangana Ranaut on Thursday in Chandigarh PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Kangana slap row: Farmers outfits back CISF official

CHANDIGARH, 7 JUNE

Some farmer outfits on Friday threw their weight behind the CISF woman constable who allegedly slapped actor and BJP MP-elect Kangana Ranaut, saying the entire sequence leading to the incident needs to be properly investigated.

Ranaut, in a video message, had on Thursday said she was hit in the face and abused by the constable during security check at the Chandigarh airport, the ugly fracas breaking out two days after she was elected to the Lok Sabha from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha were among the prominent outfits which said they stand in support of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) woman constable.

The constable, who appeared to be upset with Ranaut over her stance on the farmers' protests, has been suspended and an investigation has been launched. The CISF, tasked with providing security at airports, had also ordered a court of inquiry into the incident.

SKM (Non-Political) leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher said they will meet Punjab's Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav for a proper investigation into the matter.

"We will demand a proper investigation and we will tell him that there should be no injustice with the woman constable," Dallewal said addressing a press conference here with Pandher and some other farmer leaders.

Another video doing the rounds of social media had shown the agitated constable talking to people presumably after the incident.

Both Dallewal and Pandher lashed out at the actor for stating that terrorism was increasing in Punjab.

Dallewal said from various reports what they have come to know is that there was some argument from Ranaut's side during security check when her purse and mobile-phone was being put for checking.

If this is so, then the constable is not to be blamed, she was doing her duty, he said.

"And everyone knows the previous track record of Ranaut and the kind of language she has used towards farmers. There must have been an argument and the result of which must have led to the incident. All these things need proper investigation," he said.

"Ranaut is an actor and now even a MP, she should not speak such language. This is condemnable. We demand that action be taken against her," he said. —*PTI*

RTI REVEALS

'Vande Bharat speed down from 84 to 76 kmph in 3 yrs'

NEW DELHI, 7JUNE

The average speed of Vande Bharat trains has decreased from 84.48 kmph in 2020-21 to 76.25 kmph in 2023-24, the railway ministry said in a response to an RTI query.

Railway officials said not only Vande Bharats but many other trains are also maintaining cautionary speed at places were "huge infrastructural work" is underway.

"Besides this, some Vande Bharat trains have been launched in difficult terrain areas where there are speed restrictions due to geographical reasons or extreme weather conditions," a railway official said.

Citing the example of the Vande Bharat train between Mumbai CSMT and Madgaon, an official of the Central Railway Zone said, "Most of the Konkan railway area is 'ghat' section where trains pass through low height mountain ranges. It is a difficult terrain area where increasing speed could compromise safety."

"Things become very challenging during the monsoon season when we have to keep the maximum speed for all trains at 75 kmph," he added.

The Vande Bharat Express PHOTO: PTI

The RTI applicant, Madhya Pradesh-based Chandra Shekhar Gaur, said, "The data, obtained through the RTI, shows that the average speed of Vande Bharat trains was 84.48 in 2020-21, which decreased to 81.38 kmph in 2022-23. It further deteriorated in 2023-24 to 76.25."

"There are certain segments of tracks between Delhi and Agra which were developed in 2016 for India's first semi-high speed train Gatiman Express to run at 160 kmph. Only on those segments, the Vande Bharat also runs at 160 kmph speed. Rest of the places, its maximum speed is either 130 or less than," another railway official said.

He said the railways has been upgrading tracks to meet the speed requirement of the Vande Bharat and "it is because of these reasons there are cautions at various places". "Once these upgrades are over, we will have trains which will go up to 250 kmph," the official said.

Some of the routes on which the Vande Bharat's speed is worse than its overall average speed are Dehradun-Anand Vihar (63.42 kmph), Patna-Ranchi (62.9 kmph) and Coimbatore-Bangalore Cantt (58.11 kmph). —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

CHARGESHEET FILED AGAINST 6 FOR PARL BREACH

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

The Delhi Police on Friday filed a charge sheet before a court here against six accused in the Parliament security breach case.

The 1000-page charge sheet under the stringent UAPA was filed before Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur against Manoranjan D, Lalit Jha, Amol Shinde, Mahesh Kumawat, Sagar Sharma, and Neelam Azad. The final report was filed under the relevant sections of the UAPA and the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Special public prosecutor Akhand Pratap Singh also submitted before the court that sanctions for prosecution under section 186 IPC and under section 13 of UAPA are awaited for which supplementary charge sheet will be filed within a period of two weeks.

The court has listed the matter for filing of the supplementary charge sheet on 15 July. —*PTI*

Water levels in 5 of 11 Marathwada dams zero

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 7 JUNE

There is no water left in five out of 11 major reservoirs in Maharashtra's Marathwada region, while the Jayakwadi dam, the biggest of them, currently holds only four per cent of its total storage capacity, officials said on Friday.

Eleven major projects in this region are facing no availability of water due to scanty rainfall last year. The water stock in four of these reservoirs has gone down to zero per cent. The Jayakwadi dam, the biggest reservoir in the Marathwada region, is currently holding only three TMC (thousand million cubic feet) water, which is only 4 per cent of its total storage capacity, the divisional commissioner office said in its report.

The five reservoirs where the water level has dipped to zero per cent are Siddheshwar (Hingoli), Majalgaon and Manjara (both Beed), Nimna Terna and Sina Kolegaon (both Dharashiv).

PHOTO: PTI

The current aggregate water stock in these projects is 11.28 per cent as on Friday, which was 38.64 per cent on the same day last year, it said.

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar city receives water once every eight days depending on the water situation of the Jayakwadi dam, a civic official said, adding that the work of laying a new parallel supply line is underway and is expected to be completed by the end of this year. —*PTI*

CJI BATS FOR INDEPENDENT ARBITRATION INSTITUTIONS

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Mere creation of arbitration institutions is not sufficient and we have to ensure that these dispute resolution hubs are not controlled by a "self-perpetrating clique", Chief Justice DY Chandrachud has said.

Speaking at the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, Chandrachud said now is the time for countries such as India to step up to the occasion to create and promote a culture of commercial arbitration and the robust institutionalisation of arbitration will further the culture of arbitration in the Global South.

He said arbitration is an alternative method of dispute resolution and it no longer an "alternative" but the preferred method of seeking commercial justice.

—*PTI*

Haryana reducing water flow to Delhi, says Atishi

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Delhi minister Atishi on Friday said the water crisis in the city will not be solved even if Himachal Pradesh releases water for the national capital as Haryana has "reduced" its share.

The water minister, who visited the Wazirabad Barrage here to take stock of the water situation, charged that "Haryana is conspiring against the people of Delhi behind the back of Supreme Court". "The water level of Yamuna at Wazirabad has come down from 671 feet on June 2 to 669.7 feet on Friday. If the water level falls so low, how will the water treatment plants give water to the people of Delhi," she said while speaking to PTI Videos. Her remarks come a day after the Supreme Court directed the Himachal Pradesh government to release 137 cusecs of surplus water to the national capital, and asked Haryana to facilitate its flow. The apex court also said there should be no politics over water.

"Even if Himachal Pradesh releases water, it won't solve the situation since Haryana has reduced the share of water released by it," she added.

—*PTI*

Student was on video call home before drowning

JALGAON, 7 JUNE

Jishan Ashpak Pinjari was on video call with his father from far-away Russia when he was swept away along with his sister and two others in a fast-flowing river, the leisurely evening walk turning into tragedy right in front of the family's disbelieving eyes.

The four medical students of Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University in Veliky Novgorod city near St Petersburg drowned when they stepped into the Volkhov river while taking a stroll, university authorities said on Friday.

"When they entered the Volkhov river, Jishan made a video call to his family.

His father and other family members were pleading with Jishan and others to come out of the river waters when a strong wave swept them away," a family member told local media.

It was a devastating moment for the family as their children drowned right in front of their eyes even while they were making desperate pleas for them to come out of the water.

—*PTI*

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BREAKS RECORDS

May heatwave in India warmer by 1.5 °C

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Heatwaves similar to those experienced in May in India are almost 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than the warmest heat waves previously observed in the country, according to a new rapid attribution study by an independent group of climate scientists and researchers.

The analysts at ClimaMeter said the intense and prolonged heat wave India endured in May was a result of the naturally occurring El Nino phenomenon -- unusual warming of the ocean surface in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean -- and the rapidly increasing concentration of greenhouse gases -- primarily carbon dioxide and methane -- in the atmosphere.

Intense and prolonged heat wave India endured in May was a result of the naturally occurring El Nino PHOTO: FREEPIK

The researchers analysed how events similar to the high temperature in India's May heatwave changed in the present (2001–2023) compared to what they would have looked like if they had occurred in the past (1979–2001)."The temperature changes show that similar events produce temperatures in the present climate at least 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than what they would have been in the past over a large area of the region analyzed.

The precipitation changes do not show any significant variations," the analysis read."ClimaMeter's findings underscore that heatwaves in India are reaching unbearable temperature thresholds because of fossil fuels burning," said Davide Faranda of French National Centre for Scientific Research.

"There are no technological solutions for adapting Indian metropoles for temperatures approaching 50 degrees Celsius. We should all act now to reduce CO2 emissions and avoid exceeding vital temperature thresholds in large areas of the subtropics," he said.

Gianmarco Mengaldo of National University of Singapore said the findings show the complex interplay between natural variability and climate change, with the latter playing an important role in critical synoptic-weather-pattern changes in tropical and subtropical regions that may significantly aggravate heatwaves in the near future.

—*PTI*

THE CALM IN THE STORM

A view of the sunrise amid the sand storm, in Ajmer on Friday
PHOTO: PTI

What are neighbours expecting from India's new government?

India's general election has delivered a surprise setback for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP.

Over the past decade, Modi and the BJP have enjoyed authority and dominance over national politics. His third term as prime minister, however, will likely not be as smooth sailing as it was during the past decade, given the challenges of coalition politics.

Since Modi came to power in 2014, New Delhi has adopted "Neighborhood First" as a core component of India's foreign policy, focusing on repairing and bolstering its ties with countries in the region.

Senior BJP leader Narendra Modi being felicitated by TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan in New Delhi on Friday
PHOTO: PTI

Pakistan tensions remain

India's most tense relationship is with its archrival and neighbor to the west, Pakistan. Many Pakistanis closely followed the Indian elections.

"We are quite happy" to see Modi's party lose its outright majority in parliament, Mushahid Hussain, a Pakistani senator and expert in foreign affairs, told DW

"It will be a more chastened and somewhat weakened Modi now sitting in the PM office in Delhi," he said, adding that Pakistan hopes to see "a more subdued Indian approach to Pakistan in terms of tone and rhetoric."

Modi's government has refused to engage with Pakistan over the past few years since accusing Islamabad of cross-border terrorism.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars and many skirmishes since both were carved out into two independent states in 1947, as British colonial rule of the subcontinent came to an end.

Both claim the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir in full, but rule it in part.

IRelations between the two nuclear-armed neighbors have remained tense over the past few years.

Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's former representative to the United Nations, told DW that it's not a "favorable climate" for India-Pakistan reengagement.

"Pakistan expects little change, if any, from Modi's third term in power. Prospects for any normalization of ties between India and Pakistan are at best uncertain," she said, adding that Islamabad "will adopt a wait-and-see policy."

China looms in the background

As Islamabad strengthens its friendship with Beijing, which in turn is pumping billions of dollars of Chinese money into Pakistan to build key infrastructure such as roads and ports, India remains wary of China's growing footprint and influence there.

After the announcement of the election results, China congratulated Modi on his victory and called for "healthy and stable" bilateral relations.

Deep-seated mutual distrust has long characterised Sino-Indian relations, plagued by unresolved border disputes.

Tensions remain high, with tens of thousands of Indian and Chinese soldiers massed on their disputed border since 2020, when a clash left 20 Indian troops and four Chinese soldiers dead.

Sana Hashmi, a China expert who previously worked as a consultant in India's Foreign Ministry, said there won't be any major improvement in India-China ties in the coming years.

Sri Lanka invited to Modi's swearing-in

The swearing-in ceremony for Modi's third term is expected to take place this weekend.

New Delhi has invited the leaders of some of India's neighbors, including Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, to the event, according to local media reports.

Both Hasina and Wickremesinghe have said they will be in attendance, The Times of India reported on Thursday.

India and Sri Lanka share not only close trade relations, but also ethnic and religious ties.

But Chinese attempts to gain sway in Colombo over the past decade have caused concern in New Delhi.

"Even while colonial legacies have historically bound India and Sri Lanka together, current events highlight complex dynamics," said Anandhi Sasidharan, a former Sri Lankan minister, pointing to Sri Lanka's acute economic crisis, debt problems and the related geopolitical implications.

Building on strength with Bangladesh

India's relations with its eastern neighbor, Bangladesh, which have strengthened substantially over the past decade, will likely remain steady, said Bangladeshi officials and observers after the election results became clear.

"Our deep friendly ties will continue," Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud told journalists, adding that bilateral ties reached new heights under Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart, Hasina.

The relationship between New Delhi and Dhaka is deeply entrenched and both share security and economic interests.

"There won't be any significant policy changes regarding Bangladesh," said Touhid Hossain, a former Bangladeshi foreign secretary.

Ali Riaz, an expert on Bangladesh and professor at Illinois State University, echoed this view.

"Nothing will deter Modi to continue his foreign policy objectives as the Indian establishment will continue supporting his government," he said.

—DW News

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SALAR سالار

Can Alzheimer's be reversed? A new study finds out

Two people diagnosed with Alzheimer's claim to have conquered the disease through simple lifestyle changes.

Dementia and Alzheimer's have been the leading killers in the UK for the last ten years, accounting for 11.4 per cent of deaths in 2022. Although new drugs can reduce the disease's progression, more evidence is emerging that something as simple as integrating a healthy lifestyle can "reverse" symptoms of Alzheimer's.

Alzheimer's disease can be split in two subgroups, familial and sporadic. Only 5 per cent of patients with Alzheimer's are familial, inherited, and 95 per cent of Alzheimer's patients are sporadic, due to environmental, lifestyle and genetic risk factors. Consequently, the most effective tactic for tackling Alzheimer's is preventative and living a healthy lifestyle. This has led researchers to study risk factors associated with Alzheimer's.

Two Alzheimer's sufferers, Cici Zerbe and Simon Nicholls, claim to have beaten the deadly disease with straightforward lifestyle changes.

The pair have detailed their journey in a CNN documentary The Last Alzheimer's Patient.

Zerbe experienced a reversal of symptoms after participating in a clinical trial in the US. The trial explores the effects of intensive lifestyle changes on mild cognitive impairment or early dementia due to Alzheimer's disease. The study has not yet been published.

Lifestyle changes include switching to a plant-based diet, regular exercise, group support sessions, yoga and meditation. Zerbe said that she feels "much better" than she did before taking part in the trial five years ago, when she was diagnosed with the disease.

Remarkable improvements

Simon Nicholls, aged 55, is another person with Alzheimer's who is featured in the CNN documentary and who took part in the trial. Nicholls carries two copies of a gene variant called ApoE4, which is known to significantly increase the risk of Alzheimer's. However, after adopting healthy lifestyle changes, Nicholls saw remarkable improvements in his symptoms.

About 25 per cent of the population carry at least one copy of the ApoE4 gene variant (called an "allele") and 5 per cent carry two copies. Carrying one ApoE4 allele is associated with a three to four times increased risk of developing Alzheimer's. Carrying two copies increases the risk up to 12-fold , rendering it the greatest genetic risk factor for Alzheimer's.

These statistics amplify the remarkable and noteworthy nature of Nicholls's achievement in reversing his symptoms of Alzheimer's simply through his lifestyle choices. His biomarkers for Alzheimer's disappeared in 14 months, which is considerably more effective than most treatments for Alzheimer's.

Nicholls highlighted physical activity and dietary changes as paramount to his journey. At first, he was prescribed tirzepatide, a drug designed to suppress appetite by regulating blood sugar levels. He also incorporated regular exercise, including strength training three times a week, walking 10,000 steps daily and jogging or cycling every morning.

Cardiovascular disease is a major risk factor and potential future predictor of Alzheimer's. The heart-brain connection is crucial for providing brain cells with energy and oxygen through cerebral blood flow. Thus, poor heart health could increase the risk of Alzheimer's as brain cells receive less energy to function.

This explains why Nicholls's improved heart health and increased cardiovascular activity have improved his symptoms.

He also enforced dietary changes – removing sugar, alcohol and processed foods A recent extensive study on 60,000 Britons showed that adhering to a Mediterranean diet decreases the risk of dementia by 23 per cent. Nicholls has also been implementing good sleep hygiene to try and improve his irregular sleep pattern, as some studies show that sleep deprivation is linked to Alzheimer's.

The dominant theory is that during sleep toxic proteins, such as amyloid, can be flushed away with the glymphatic system.

These would otherwise accumulate and cause dementia. *—Courtesy The Conversation*

Dementia and Alzheimer's have been the leading killers in the UK for the last ten years, accounting for 11.4 per cent of deaths in 2022
PHOTO: PIXABAY

Climate change is deepening India's north-south divide

India's new government faces the pressing challenge of mitigating the economic concerns of the southern states, which are demanding their due share within the country's federal framework and rebelling against 'fiscal injustice'.

The main point of contention is the alleged discrimination in the distribution of central funds against the more developed South Indian states not ruled by the BJP as compared to its pro-BJP northern counterparts, which contribute less to the national economy.

Estimates show that out of the 28 states and eight union territories in India, the combined contribution of five South Indian states — Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh — to the country's GDP is more than 30 per cent. These remittance-rich states also contribute significantly to India's forex reserves, which recently reached a record high of $648.7 billion.

In 2018, the ruling Left government in Kerala criticised the Union government for failing to provide adequate support to the 'Rebuild Kerala' initiative after the state experienced its worst floods in a century.

In April 2024, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu were at loggerheads with the Union government over the release of relief funds for casualties caused by floods, Cyclone Maichung and drought. During protests in Delhi, Karnataka highlighted the pending drought relief as a key issue, alongside injustice in tax dispersal.

It was only after the respective state governments moved the Supreme Court, invoking the violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Indian constitution, that the Union government released Rs 3,730.32 crore ($37,300 million) as 'relief assistance for natural calamity' from the National Disaster Response Fund during the last week of April.

While examining the petition filed by the Karnataka government, the Supreme Court division bench stated, 'Let there not be a contest between the Union and states'.

Earlier this year, the Chief Ministers and ministers of Karnataka and Kerala, along with prominent leaders of Tamil Nadu's ruling party DMK), organised a protest in the national capital against unjust practices in tax devolution and grant-in-aid from the Union government.

In response to the Union Budget 2024, DK Suresh, a Lok Sabha member and brother of the Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister, made a provocative separatist threat, stating, "South Indian states may be forced to demand a separate nation if the Centre does not provide them with adequate funds.

Elephants cool themselves to get relief from the scorching heat
PHOTO: PTI

Although much has already been discussed about the economic dimensions of the north-south drift in Indian politics, its underlying connection to climate change remains largely unexamined

Climate scientists have warned that South India is more sensitive than the rest of the country to changes in temperature. In a 2021 report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggested that global warming could lead to extreme rainfall events in South India, in addition to monsoon rains.

The Western Ghats, renowned for tourism and agriculture and primarily traversing Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, are highly susceptible to climate-related disasters.

Research has shown the link between urban-centric growth models and the likelihood of climate disasters in emerging economies, and this is particularly applicable in a development-craving, corruption-prone country like India.

- The main point of contention is the alleged discrimination in the distribution of central funds against the more developed South Indian states not ruled by the BJP as compared to its pro-BJP northern counterparts, which contribute less to the national economy

As explained by political scientist Shaji Varkey, "A vibrant economy with little to no environmental planning leads to uncontrolled urbanisation, resulting in concrete jungles, encroachment on water bodies, blocked drainages, indiscriminate quarrying, sand mining, and land use changes. This makes South India more vulnerable to floods, landslides, urban heat islands, and water shortages."

Bengaluru, the so-called 'Silicon Valley of Asia', is a textbook case of this 'great Indian vulnerability'. Studies indicate that unabated, unplanned and untenable urbanisation is the driving force behind Bengaluru's transformation from what was once known as the 'Garden City' into an urban dystopia, characterised by recurring episodes of flash floods and acute water shortages.

The South Indian states face an environmental opportunity cost by growing at a rate higher than the national average and contributing more to the federal coffers than what they are allocated in return

Over the past few years, compensation for climate disasters through central funds has become a point of contention between the Union government and the southern states of India.

The new government in India must tackle the recurring climate disasters and associated casualties affecting its economic powerhouse in the south, which drives the country's growth engine.

New Delhi can no longer go forward with its leadership role in the Global South on climate change debates by overlooking its own southern states striving for 'climate justice' within India's federal arrangements.

—Courtesy Downtoearth

PHOTO: X/@ASTRO_SUNI

Sunita Williams, Butch Wilmore dock Starliner at ISS

HOUSTON, 7 JUNE

NASA's Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams and her colleague Butch Wilmore have successfully docked Boeing's Starliner spacecraft to the International Space Station (ISS) after overcoming new issues that cropped up en route to the orbiting laboratory. Williams, 58, flew to space for the third time on Wednesday along with Wilmore, scripting history as the first members aboard Boeing's Starliner spacecraft to the ISS. Williams is the pilot for the flight test vwhile Wilmore, 61, is the commander of the mission. Boeing Starliner spacecraft successfully docked at the International Space Station at 1.34 pm on Thursday, about 26 hours after launching from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, NASA said in a statement. *—AP*

N Korean defector group sends propaganda leaflets

PYONGYANG, 7 JUNE

A North Korean defectors' group said that it has sent about 10 large plastic balloons carrying propaganda leaflets against the North Korean regime across the border, which has further raised questions about Pyongyang resuming to send trash-filled balloons, reported Yonhap News Agency. The balloons were filled with 200,000 flyers, criticising the regime, dollar bills and USB sticks loaded with K-pop and trot music, and were floated from Pocheon, north of Seoul, early Thursday, according to Park Sang-hak, head of the Fighters for a Free North Korea (FFNK). A military source said that some of these balloons have flown into the North but said that no signs of retaliatory action were detected yet from the North Korean side, including any launch of ballistic missiles or release of balloons loaded with trash, as reported by Yonhap News Agency. *—ANI*

Biden to meet Zelenskyy as Ukraine struggles

PARIS, 7 JUNE

US President Joe Biden was due to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Paris on Friday. This was amid Kyiv's army enduring its hardest days of fighting since the early weeks of the war with Russia and preparing for what officials say could be a tough summer ahead. The United States is by far Kyiv's biggest supplier of wartime support, and Ukraine is trying to fend off an intense Russian offensive in eastern areas of the country. The push is focused on the Ukrainian border regions of Kharkiv and Donetsk but Ukrainian officials say it could spread wider as Russia's bigger army seeks to take advantage.*—PTI*

Taiwan detects 10 Chinese ships, 6 jets around nation

TAIPEI, 7 JUNE

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence has detected six Chinese military aircraft, six naval vessels, and four Coast Guard ships around the nation between 6 am. on Thursday and 6 am on Friday, according to Taiwan News. According to the MND, one Chinese drone was spotted in the southwest corner of Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ), while one PLA helicopter was tracked in the southeast ADIZ. Taiwan responded by sending aircraft, navy ships, and coastal-based missile systems to monitor PLA activity, as per Taiwan News. China, since September 2020, has increased its use of grey zone tactics by incrementally increasing the number of military aircraft and naval ships operating around Taiwan. *—AP*

Houthis detain at least 9 UN staffers and others

The United Nation has not yet made any comment

DUBAI, 7 JUNE

At least nine Yemeni employees of United Nations agencies have been detained by Yemen's Houthi rebels under unclear circumstances, authorities said Friday, as the rebels face increasing financial pressure and airstrikes from a US-led coalition. Others working for aid groups also likely have been taken.

The detentions come as the Houthis, who seized Yemen's capital nearly a decade ago and have been fighting a Saudi-led coalition since shortly after, have been targeting shipping throughout the Red Sea corridor over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. But while gaining more attention internationally, the secretive group has cracked down at dissent at home, including recently sentencing 44 people to death.

Regional officials, speaking to Associated Press on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to brief journalists, confirmed the UN detentions. Those held include staff from the United Nations human rights agency, its development program, the World Food Program and one working for the office of its special envoy, the officials said. The wife of one of those held is also detained.

The detentions come as the Houthis have been targeting shipping throughout the Red Sea corridor *PHOTO: X/@KAREEMRIFAI*

- Those held include staff from the United Nations human rights agency, its development program, the World Food Program and one working for the office of its special envoy

The UN declined to immediately comment. The Mayyun Organisation for Human Rights, which similarly identified the UN staffers held, named other aid groups whose employees were detained by the Houthis across four provinces the Houthis hold — Amran, Hodeida, Saada and Saana. Those groups did not immediately acknowledge the detentions.

"We condemn in the strongest terms this dangerous escalation, which constitutes a violation of the privileges and immunities of United Nations employees granted to them under international law, and we consider it to be oppressive, totalitarian, blackmailing practices to obtain political and economic gains," the organisation said in a statement.

Activists, lawyers and others also began an open online letter, calling on the Houthis to immediately release those detained, because if they don't, it "helps isolate the country from the world."

Yemen's Houthi rebels and their affiliated media organisations did not immediately acknowledge the detentions. However, the Iranian-backed rebels planned for weekly mass demonstrations after noon prayers Friday, when Houthi officials typically speak on their actions.

"Internal tensions and conflicts could spiral out of control and lead Yemen into complete economic collapse," warned Yemeni journalist Mohammed Ali Thamer in an analysis published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. *—AP*

School strike: US calls for transparency from Israel

WASHINGTON, 7 JUNE

The US has told Israel it must be fully "transparent" over an air strike that reportedly killed at least 35 people at a central Gaza school packed with displaced people on Thursday morning.

Local journalists told the BBC a warplane had fired two missiles at classrooms on the top floor of the school in the Nuseirat urban refugee camp. The Israeli military said it had conducted a "precise" strike on a "Hamas compound" in the school, but Gaza's Hamas-run government media office denied the claim.

The US called on Israel to identify publicly the Hamas fighters it said it had killed - just as the Israeli military gave the names of nine of them. Israel frequently identifies militants it targets in air strikes but it is rare for the US to urge it to do so.

The Israelis "told us there were 20 to 30 militants they were targeting [and] they're going to release the names of those they believe they've killed, those militants", US state department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

"That is what they have said they would provide. We expect them to do that, as well as any other details that would shed light on this incident." In a near-simultaneous news briefing, Israeli army spokesperson Daniel Hagari gave the names of nine Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters he said had been killed in the strike. He said more would be identified after work to "verify the information".

In Washington, Miller said the US has seen reports that 14 children were killed in the strike. "If that is accurate that 14 children were killed, those aren't terrorists," he said. *—BBC News*

At least 35 people killed in the attack *PHOTO: BBC*

A picture of the destruction in a remote village *PHOTO: ALJAZEERA*

Ukraine strikes into Russia using US arms

KYIV, 7 JUNE

Ukraine may have realised the first benefits of being allowed to strike Russian territory with Western weapons last week.

On 26 and 27 May, France and Germany said they were allowing Ukraine to use their weapons against targets on Russian soil, following Russia's new offensive against Kharkiv on 10 May. US sources told media on 30 May that the US was allowing Ukraine to use its weapons "for counter-fire purposes in Kharkiv".

That suggested Ukraine was only allowed to fire back against a position from which incoming fire had originated, but not to use its intelligence to target weapons systems and troop concentrations pre-emptively.

"This US ambiguity misses an opportunity to deter Russian preparations for offensive operations elsewhere across the border into northern Ukraine," said the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based thintank.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last week reported concentrations of troops north of the Ukrainian city of Sumy.

Ukraine's first declared strike on Russian soil with Western weapons last Friday may have been based on a misunderstanding of these restrictions. "The Defence Forces of Ukraine attacked the Kerch ferry crossing with ATACMS [US Army Tactical] missiles, which was actively used by the enemy to secure its grouping of troops in temporarily occupied Crimea," announced Ukraine's general staff.

The US also said it was not allowing Ukraine to use its 300km-range ATACMS in Russia – only on occupied territories, essentially Crimea, which extends as much as 300km from Ukrainian frontlines in places.

Ukraine's next reported strike on Russian soil with a US weapon appears to have been in the designated area. Germany's ambassador to the UK expressed similar restrictions to those of the US, saying Ukraine could "defend itself" against attacks on the Kharkiv region from bordering Russian territory.

—Al Jazeera

Imran invokes Kejriwal's example before Pak SC

ISLAMABAD, 7 JUNE

Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan has invoked the case of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal getting bail to campaign ahead of India's general elections, as he complained before the Supreme Court about the mistreatment meted to him in jail.

During his appearance on Thursday before a five-member Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa in a case related to amendments to the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO), the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman complained of the "victimisation" that he faced since his ouster from power in April 2022.

Justices Aminuddin Khan, Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Athar Minallah, and Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi also sat on the bench. Justice Minallah remarked that it was unfortunate that Khan was in jail as he was the head of a large party with millions of followers.Khan, complaining of oppression against him, pointed out that Kejriwal was released on bail by the apex court ahead of the Indian general elections for campaigning for his party but he was facing oppression in Pakistan which was under undeclared "martial law". Khan,71, complained that he was convicted within five days to keep him away from the general elections.

Imran Khan *PHOTO: X/@IMRANKHANPTI*

- Justices Aminuddin Khan, Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Athar Minallah, and Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi also sat on the bench

Khan also expressed dismay over the Supreme Court's judgment rejecting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's government plea requesting the live streaming of the case. *—PTI*

SPARKS OUTRAGE

UK PM Sunak apologises for leaving D-Day event early

LONDON, 7 JUNE

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak apologized Friday for leaving D-Day commemorations in France early to return to the election campaign trail — a decision slammed as disgraceful by his political rivals.

Sunak, who is fighting to keep his job in Britain's 4 July election, said that, "on reflection" the decision was a mistake. Sunak was not alongside leaders including US President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy for the major memorial event at Omaha Beach in Normandy on Thursday. Former Prime Minister David Cameron, who is now foreign minister, represented the UK.

Rishi Sunak *PHOTO: PTI*

Labour Party leader Keir Starmer, the current favourite to win the election, attended and was pictured meeting Zelenskyy and other leaders. Earlier in the day, Sunak had attended a ceremony at the British memorial in Normandy alongside King Charles III and surviving World War II veterans. He also attended a commemoration in Portsmouth, England, the day before. Sunak wrote on X that the 80th anniversary of the Allied invasion that helped free Europe from the Nazis "should be about those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. The last thing I want is for the commemorations to be overshadowed by politics." The prime minister recorded an interview with broadcaster ITV on Thursday after returning from France. A clip released by the broadcaster showed Sunak denying opposition allegations that he lied by making inaccurate statements about the Opposition Labour Party's tax plans. Starmer said "Rishi Sunak will have to answer for his choice" to return to campaigning. "For me there was only one choice. ... There was nowhere else I was going to be," Starmer told broadcasters. *—AP*

Pål Jonson *PHOTO: X/@PLJONSON*

'Actions against Philippines threatens security'

MANILA, 7 JUNE

Sweden's Defence Minister Pål Jonson has expressed alarm over Beijing's repeated dangerous manoeuvres against Philippine vessels in the South China Sea, saying such actions threaten security, undermine stability and underscore the need to invest "for our security and freedom."

Sweden is one of the possible sources of supersonic fighter jets that the Philippines plans to acquire as its military shifts focus from decades of fighting communist and Muslim insurgencies to territorial defence.

Jonson used the name the Philippines has adopted for the stretch of waters called the exclusive economic zone extending from its western coast to the South China Sea, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety and guarded closely with its coast guard, navy and other ships.

Confrontations between Chinese and Philippine government ships over two disputed shoals have flared alarmingly since last year, causing collisions.

China's use of powerful water cannons had damaged Philippine vessels, injured several Filipino navy personnel, and strained diplomatic relations. The Philippines coast guard belatedly reported on Friday that one of its high-speed boats was blocked and surrounded by Chinese coast guard vessels as it approached a Philippine territorial outpost in the Second Thomas Shoal on 19 May to get a sick Filipino military sailor from a navy boat deployed near the shoal outpost. *—AP*

4 Indian med students drown in Russia

MOSCOW, 7 JUNE

Four Indian medical students drowned when they entered a fast-flowing river near St Petersburg in Russia, authorities said on Friday, in the worst tragedy to hit the Indian student community in the country.

The four students from Maharashtra - Harshal Anantrao Desale, Jishan Ashpak Pinjari, Jia Firoj Pinjari and Malik Gulamgous Mohammad Yakub, were studying at the Novgorod State University in Veliky Novgorod city. A fifth student, Nisha Bhupesh Sonawane, was rescued. The Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi termed it an unfortunate incident. "Four Indian students who were studying at the Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University located in Veliky Novgorod, Russia, drowned in an unfortunate incident in the Volkhov river. In the incident, a fifth Indian student was saved from drowning and is presently receiving medical attention," it said. Local emergency services have so far recovered two dead bodies from the Volkhov River. The search for the remaining two missing students continues. Jishan and Jia were siblings.

Local emergency services have so far recovered two dead bodies *PHOTO: PTI*

Local media reports said that the students drowned as they tried to save one of their female friends. They all were aged 18-20. Jishan and Jia hailed from Amalner in the Jalgaon district of Maharashtra. Harshal Desale belonged to Bhadgaon, also in the Jalgaon district. *—PTI*

BEATS ALL ODDS

China's exports grow 7.6 per cent in May

HONG KONG, 7 JUNE

China's exports in May grew at their fastest pace in more than a year despite trade tensions, though imports fell short of analyst expectations, according to customs data released on Friday.

Exports jumped 7.6 per cent in May from the same month last year to USD 302.35 billion, rising at the fastest pace since April 2023. Imports rose by 1.8 per cent to USD 219.73 billion, missing estimates of about 4 per cent growth.

The uptick in exports is also partly due to a lower base in the same period last year, when exports declined 7.5 per cent. In comparison, exports grew by 1.5 per cent in April compared with the same period last year, while April imports rose by 8.4 per cent.

The strong exports caused China's trade surplus to widen to USD 82.62 billion, up from April's USD 72.35 billion. The growth in exports comes as China faces escalated trade tensions with the US and Europe. The US is ramping up tariffs on Chinese-made electric cars while Europe is considering levying similar tariffs. "Foreign tariffs are unlikely to immediately threaten exports; if anything, they may boost exports at the margin as firms speed up shipments to front-run the duties," said Zichun Huang of Capital Economics in a note.

China said exports jumped by 7.6 per cent in May *PHOTO: PTI*

Huang also said that exports would be supported by a weaker real effective exchange rate. "Import volumes were little changed last month, but they will probably rise soon, with increased government spending supporting the import-intensive construction sector," she said.

The 10 nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations remained the largest destination for Chinese products, with exports to ASEAN growing 9.7 per cent in May year-on-year to USD 50.83 billion.

Exports to the US grew just 0.2 per cent in May compared with the same time last year, while shipments to the European Union declined, slipping 3.9 per cent year-on-year. *—AP*

PHOTO: IANS

Rupee rises 14 paise to 83.39 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 7 JUNE

The rupee appreciated 14 paise to 83.39 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, in line with a firm trend in domestic equity markets after the Reserve Bank kept the key policy rate unchanged. A weak American currency against major crosses overseas and lower crude prices in international markets also supported the local currency, forex traders said. However, foreign fund outflows restricted the upward movement in the rupee, they added. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened strong at 83.46 and moved in the range of 83.48 to 83.37 against the greenback. The unit finally settled at 83.39 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 14 paise from its previous close. *—PTI*

Sebi recognised for new regulatory practices

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Sebi has been given 'Best Conduct of Business Regulator' award in Asia Pacific by The Asian Banker for its role in enhancing the regulatory framework for securities markets in India. The award was received by Sebi's Whole Time Member Kamlesh Chandra Varshney in a ceremony held in Hong Kong. "This authority (Sebi) has been actively working towards instantaneous settlement. In 2021, T+1 settlement was introduced in a phased manner, which was fully implemented from January 2023. This move has provided investors with faster access to their funds following trade execution and settlement, enhancing market efficiency and liquidity," The Asian Banker said. Sebi has improved the conduct of business in the country's financial markets, ensuring fair treatment of consumers and robust market integrity, it added. *—PTI*

Silver prices surge ₹2,600 to ₹95K; gold up Rs 150

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Silver prices continued to shine bright by rallying sharply Rs 2,600 to Rs 95,900 per kg in the national capital on Friday, while gold went up Rs 150, in line with firm global trends. According to HDFC Securities, rising for the second straight session, silver prices surged Rs 2,600 to Rs 95,900 per kg. It had closed at Rs 93,300 per kg in the previous session. Gold prices climbed Rs 150 to Rs 73,650 per 10 grams. In last session, precious metal had settled at Rs 73,500 per 10 grams. "Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 73,650 per 10 grams, up by Rs 150, taking bullish cues from the overseas market," Saumil Gandhi, Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. *—PTI*

TCS Launches GenAI Platform WisdomNext

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Friday said it has launched a Gen AI platform WisdomNext. The platform aggregates multiple Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) technologies into a single interface and enables companies to rapidly adopt next-gen technology at scale, lower costs and operate within a regulatory framework, the company said at the launch event. "TCS AI WisdomNext helps our customers take advantage of GenAI to unlock the full potential of their data, drive greater business innovation and efficiency, and gain a competitive edge," said Siva Ganesan, Head, AI.Cloud Unit, TCS. Customers appreciate the newly launched platform's ability to help navigate a diverse and quickly evolving AI marketplace and rapidly compose 'art-of-the-possible' solutions, he added. *—PTI*

Market flying high, Sensex, Nifty break all records

30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,720.8 points

MUMBAI, 7 JUNE

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty climbed over 2 per cent to settle at record closing high levels on Friday after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) revised upwards the GDP growth projection to 7.2 per cent for 2024-25 from 7 per cent earlier.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,720.8 points, or 2.29 per cent, to hit a new record peak of 76,795.31 in day trade. The benchmark ended at 76,693.36, up 1,618.85 points, or 2.16 per cent.

The NSE Nifty climbed 498.8 points, or 2.18 per cent, to 23,320.20 during the day and is just 18.5 points from hitting its record high level. It settled with a jump of 468.75 points, or 2.05 per cent, at 23,290.15.

IT and interest rate-sensitive bank, realty, and auto stocks ended with sharp gains. The RBI left its key interest rates unchanged on Friday as expected, keeping the focus on inflation amid robust economic growth that is likely to provide the new Modi government headroom for manoeuvring reforms.

The Monetary Policy Committee, consisting of three RBI and an equal number of external members, kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent for an eighth straight policy meeting and stuck to its relatively hawkish stance of "withdrawal of accommodation", Governor Shaktikanta Das said in his statement.

With the Indian economy, Asia's third-largest, growing faster than expected in the previous year, the RBI raised its GDP growth projection for the current fiscal through March 2025 to 7.2 per cent from 7 per cent while maintaining its inflation forecast at 4.5 per cent.

"The anticipation of stability within the coalition government at the centre, coupled with the RBI's upward revision of its growth forecast for FY25 to 7.2 per cent, fuelled a broad-based rally in the domestic market. The Indian market surpassed its previous record high set on exit-poll day and reached a fresh peak," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

All the 30 Sensex companies ended in the positive territory, with Mahindra & Mahindra, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Infosys and Tata Steel emerging as the biggest gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, and Shanghai settled with gains while Tokyo and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading lower. US markets ended on a mixed note on Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.04 per cent to USD 79.95 a barrel. *—PTI*

MPC MEETING

RBI raises GDP growth projection to 7.2% for FY25

MUMBAI, 7 JUNE

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday revised upwards the GDP growth projection for the current fiscal to 7.2 per cent from 7 per cent on rising private consumption and revival of demand in rural areas during Monetary Policy Committee meeting.

Unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said estimates released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) placed India's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth at 8.2 per cent in 2023-24.

"During 2024-25 so far, domestic economic activity has maintained resilience," he said, adding that manufacturing activity continues to gain ground on the back of strengthening domestic demand. Also, the services sector maintained buoyancy, as evident in available high-frequency indicators.

Later replying to a question if the economy was overheating, RBI deputy governor Michael Debabrata Patra said:

"We are not seeing signs of overheating because, remember, that level of output had fallen very low during the pandemic and even these high rates of growth are enabling it to catch up with that level. So, no signs of overheating".

In his monetary policy statement, Governor Das said private consumption, the mainstay of aggregate demand, is recovering with steady discretionary spending in urban areas.

Shaktikanta Das *PHOTO: PTI*

The revival in rural demand is getting a fillip from improving farm sector activity, and investment activity continues to gain traction on the back of ongoing expansion in non-food bank credit.

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday decided to keep the policy rate unchanged for the eighth time in a row at 6.5 per cent

"Taking all these factors into consideration, real GDP growth for 2024-25 is projected at 7.2 per cent with Q1 at 7.3 per cent, Q2 at 7.2 per cent, Q3 at 7.3 per cent, and Q4 at 7.2 per cent. The risks are evenly balanced," Das said.

Das has called on banks to re-evaluate their business strategies to address the persistent gap between credit and deposit growth. Das mentioned that additional measures to moderate unsecured loan growth might be necessary. *—PTI*

'Monetary policy actions depends on inflation'

MUMBAI, 7 JUNE

Governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may consider "further policy actions" only if it is confident of headline inflation staying put at 4 per cent.

He said it is the central bank's core objective to align the inflation rate with the 4 per cent target, and added that no action on rates will be possible till the RBI is confident of it remaining at or below 4 per cent. Speaking to reporters at the customary interaction after choosing a status quo in rates for the eighth consecutive time, Das said as per the RBI's projections, consumer price inflation is coming at 3.8 per cent in the December quarter, but rising again later to touch 5 per cent. "It has to align with the target and once it reaches 4 per cent, it has to stay there. When we will get confidence that this will stay at 4 per cent and will not go up, then we will think about further monetary policy actions," Das said. He was replying a specific question on when to expect a rate cut from the central bank. *—PTI*

ONGC invites global bid to boost production from Mumbai High

MUMBAI, 7 JUNE

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) announced to engage a globally-proven Technical Service Provider to enhance production from Mumbai High, the company informed in a social media post on Friday.

The ONGC said that "it is keen to engage an internationally-proven 'Technical Service Provider' to enhance production from its maturing Mumbai High field on the Arabian Sea". The Mumbai High field, which began production in 1976, is now in a mature stage, having produced oil and gas for 48 years. Over the years, ONGC has implemented various schemes to sustain and enhance production levels.

However, the company recognizes that further potential can be unlocked by applying best-in-class reservoir management technologies and adopting globally recognized operational and management practices.

PHOTO: X@HARDEEPSPURI

- ONGC said that "it is keen to engage an internationally-proven 'Technical Service Provider' to enhance production from its maturing Mumbai High field on Arabian Sea"

To identify the appropriate service provider, ONGC has initiated an international competitive bidding (ICB) process, which was officially floated on 1 June 2024. Interested parties have until 15 September 2024 to submit their bids. The criteria for participation are stringent, with a focus on major international oil and gas companies that have annual revenues exceeding 75 billion USD. This ensures that only the most capable and experienced firms are considered for this critical role. *—ANI*

Amazon to acquire some assets of MX Player

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

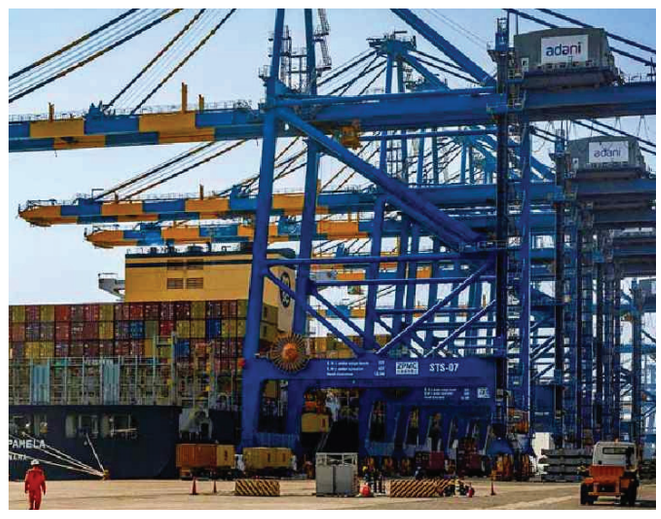
US technology firm Amazon has signed an agreement to acquire some of the assets of Times Internet's video entertainment platform MX Players in an estimated USD 80-100 million deal, according to sources aware of the development.

MX Player is among the top three video players and editors app category and in the top 50 Android apps in terms of usage in India, as per data traffic insights from Similarweb. "Amazon has signed a deal to acquire some of the assets of MX Players in a deal, which is estimated to be in the range of USD 80-100 million. The deal was signed early this week," a source said.

Times Internet acquired MX Players for USD 140 million in 2018. Amazon officials have confirmed the deal but added that the agreement has been signed to purchase some assets from MX Player, and the transaction is not yet complete.

"We are always looking for ways to introduce new products and services that help improve customers' lives. We're excited to continue to entertain India with the great local originals and exclusive content available across our Prime Video and miniTV services in India," an Amazon spokesperson said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X@PAVAN99912



APSEZ has to deploy cargo handling equipment within seven months from the letter of acceptance (LOA) date *photo: X@ttindia*

Adani Ports bags 5-year ops, maintenance deal at Calcutta port

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited (APSEZ) on Friday said it has secured a five-year Operation and Maintenance (O&M) contract for the container facility at the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port in Kolkata.

With this, APSEZ has to deploy cargo handling equipment within seven months from the letter of acceptance (LOA) date, the company said in a statement.

"APSEZ won the five-year O&M contract through a competitive bidding process, which mandates the successful bidder to deploy cargo handling equipment within seven months from the letter of acceptance (LOA) date," the statement said.

"The presence of APSEZ at the dock is likely to improve connectivity between the terminal and its container ports, particularly with the transhipment hubs at Vizhinjam and Colombo that are targeted for commissioning during the year," it said.

APSEZ whole-time director and CEO Ashwani Gupta said, "The award of the O&M contract for container handling facilities at Netaji Subhas Dock to APSEZ underlines our commitment to develop ports and logistics infrastructure across the country and the potential we see in West Bengal.

"We will bring our experience of over two decades of efficiently managing various container terminals within India and outside, benefiting customers and the people of the state." *—PTI*

Forex reserves jump to all-time high

UMBAI, 7 JUNE

India's forex reserves jumped USD 4.837 billion to a new all-time high of USD 651.51 billion for the week ended 31 May, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had dropped USD 2.027 billion to USD 646.673 billion. "Touching a new milestone, India's foreign exchange reserves reached a historical high of USD 651.5 billion as on 31 May," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said in his statement while announcing the bimonthly policy review.

The previous high for the kitty a crucial guard against any disturbances in the external sector was USD 648.87 billion on 10 May. For the week ended May 31, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 5.065.51 billion to USD 572.564 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves decreased USD 212 million to USD 56.501 billion during the week, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down USD 17 million to USD 18.118 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF was up USD 1 million to USD 4.326 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed. *—PTI*

Commercial vehicle sales likely to dip 4-7% dip

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

Hit by a high base of last year and weakness in demand, the domestic commercial vehicle industry is expected to witness a dip of 4-7 per cent in wholesale volumes in the current fiscal as compared to FY23, rating agency Icra said on Friday.

The medium and heavy commercial vehicle (trucks) volumes are expected to contract by 4-7 per cent year-on-year given the high base effect and the impact of the Lok Sabha polls on infrastructure activities in the first few months.

Similarly, the volume of light commercial vehicles (trucks) wholesale volumes is likely to decline by 5-8 per cent in FY2025 due to factors such as a high base effect, sustained slowdown in e-commerce, and cannibalisation from electric three-wheelers, Icra said.

The rating agency expects the domestic CV industry's uptrend to be arrested in FY2025, with a decline of 4-7 per cent in wholesale volumes, it stated. This follows a muted year-on-year growth of 1 per cent and 3 per cent for wholesale and retail sales, respectively, in FY2024, it added.

"FY2022 and FY2023 had witnessed a very sharp growth in volume as well as tonnage terms, enlarging the base. The domestic CV volume growth momentum slowed down in FY2024 and is expected to dip in FY2025 amid the transient moderation in economic activity in some sectors in the backdrop of the General Elections," Icra Ratings Senior Vice President & Co-Group Head Kinjal, Shah said. *—PTI*

MONOPOLY LAWS

Microsoft, OpenAI & Nvidia investigated

WASHINGTON, 7 JUNE

US antitrust enforcers have decided to investigate the roles Microsoft, Nvidia and OpenAI have played in the artificial intelligence boom, according to people familiar with the pending actions.

The Department of Justice will launch an investigation of chipmaker Nvidia, while the Federal Trade Commission will scrutinize close business partners Microsoft and ChatGPT-maker OpenAI, according to two people who were not authorized to publicly discuss details of the investigations and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Nvidia and OpenAI declined to comment Thursday.

New York Times was first to report Thursday on a deal between antitrust regulators at the two agencies *PHOTO: X@WHATSN2DAY*

Microsoft didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. New York Times was first to report Thursday on a deal between antitrust regulators at the two agencies.

Emboldened by President Joe Biden's push for tougher scrutiny of Big Tech's business practices, federal officials have signaled for more than a year that they've been watching out for monopolistic behavior in the rapidly advancing industry of chatbots and other generative AI products that can produce human-like text, imagery and sound.

Microsoft's relationship with OpenAI has been particularly close, supplying the smaller San Francisco company with the vast computing resources needed to train generative AI systems like ChatGPT. The entire AI industry has also relied heavily on Nvidia's specialized semiconductors to power AI applications. Demand for its AI chips has led Nvidia's stock to soar, surpassing $3 trillion in market value Wednesday and making it one of the most valuable companies in the S&P 500. *—AP*

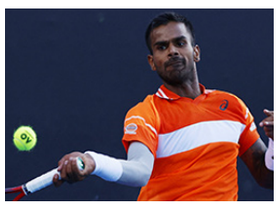


PHOTO: PTI

Sumit Nagal enters semi-final of ATP Challenger event

DUBAI, 7 JUNE

India's top-ranked singles player Sumit Nagal cruised to the semifinal of the ATP 100 Challenger event, winning his quarter-final match against Russia's Ivan Gakhov 6-1 7-6 (7-4) in 82 minutes in Heilbronn (Germany) on Friday. Nagal, currently placed 95th in the world, would like to earn as many ranking points as possible to give himself the best chance of qualifying for the singles event at the Paris Olympics, where the men's draw will be 64. The Indian ace brushed aside his disappointing first-round straight-set exit from the French Open at the hands of Karen Khachanov and has been in good form through the week.—*AP*

Khelo India Women's League to kick off from 10 June

NEW DELHI, 7 JUNE

The upcoming fourth season of Khelo India Women's League will commence on 10 June with the South Zone wushu league in Bagalkot, Karnataka, with around 300 athletes taking part across sub-junior, junior and senior categories in the Sanda and Taolu categories. The participation will be open to all Wushu players from Andhra Pradesh, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep and Odisha. The fourth season of the Khelo India Women's League initiative is coming off after a successful 2023-24 season, where a total of 502 tournaments were completed, and over 56,000 women athletes from 36 States and Union Territories across 18 sports participated.—*PTI*

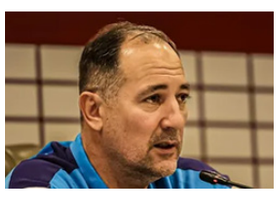


PHOTO: PTI

Don't have time to feel sorry for ourselves: Stimac

KOLKATA, 7 JUNE

A defiant India football coach Igor Stimac said his team has no time "to feel sorry" for itself after the disappointing goalless draw against Kuwait in a crucial World Cup qualifying match here as it is "still alive" in the race to enter the third round. India was thoroughly disappointed in the game that marked the end of talismanic skipper Sunil Chhetri's international career after a glorious run of 19 years in which he scored 94 goals in 151 games.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Chennaiyin FC sign experienced defender Laldinpuia

CHENNAI, 7 JUNE

In their third signing ahead of the ISL's 2024-25 season, Chennaiyin FC has roped in experienced defender PC Laldinpuia on a three-year deal. The 27-year-old from Mizoram is a versatile player having made his mark in defence as well as in midfield. He has joined the Marina Machans following an impressive performance with Jamshedpur FC last season. Laldinpuia made his Indian Super League debut with Jamshedpur under Owen Coyle in 2022 and he was also part of the team that lifted the ISL League Shield in the same year. "In Laldinpuia we have got an incredible center back on the back of a great season on our hands. I have worked with him briefly and I'm confident he will be well-loved amongst the squad," Chennaiyin head coach Coyle said.—*PTI*

T20 WORLD CUP

NZ face Afghanistan test; Sri Lanka take on B'desh

Sri Lanka-Bangladesh renew rivalry

PROVIDENCE, 7 JUNE

PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP

New Zealand will have no room for complacency when they begin the T20 World Cup campaign against a gutsy Afghanistan side full of IPL stars in a Group C fixture here on Saturday.

New Zealand finds themselves in a difficult group with two-time champions West Indies and Afghanistan also vying for the top two spots.

With rain restricting their training sessions, New Zealand's preparation for the marquee event has been less than ideal.

Additionally, they take on Afghanistan and West Indies in their opening two games.

Come Saturday, Kane Williamson and Co. will have to get the better of a side that is not only warmed up but has also registered a morale-boosting win and knows the conditions here well.

However, New Zealand's strength in ICC events has been their adaptability, they always manage to turn up, reaching the latter stages.

And with a wealth of experience as well as an exuberance of youth in the likes of Finn Allen and Rachin Ravindra on the side, they will be expected to get past the Afghans. On paper, New Zealand have all bases covered, they have depth in batting and variety in bowling.

Trent Boult will look dominant with the new ball, with Lockie Ferguson and Tim Southee complementing him.

Left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner has a phenomenal record in the Caribbean, averaging under 17 with the ball at an economy of 5.5 and he will be looking to outsmart the Afghans.

match starts at 5 am IST

Sri Lanka-Bangladesh renew rivalry

In Dallas, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh will renew their rivalry in a bid to improve their chances to reach the Super Eights.

Group D or the 'Group of Death' features three full members -- South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh -- the Netherlands, who are capable of pulling off upset wins, and Nepal. and wins and margin of victories could play a vital role towards the end of the group stage.

Sri Lanka will have to bounce back from their crushing defeat to South Africa in their opener. Their batters will be expected to show better shot selection and greater match awareness.

The bowlers did well while defending 77 against South Africa and the Islanders would fancy their chances against an out-of-form Bangladesh side.

Match Starts at 6 am IST.

—*PTI*

USA outclass sloppy Pak in super over finish

KARACHI, 7 JUNE

Saurabh Nethralvakar celebrates after their win PHOTO: PTI

The Pakistan cricket fraternity reacted with disbelief after the team's shock defeat at the hands of tournament debutants USA in the T20 World Cup, calling it a "black day".

Playing in their maiden World Cup, newcomers USA prevailed in the Super Over to stun former champions Pakistan after both the teams ended at the same score in normal play at Dallas' Grand Prairie Stadium.

Former captain Younis Khan said Pakistan had made some tactical blunders when it mattered the most."I would have liked to see Fakhar Zaman take the strike in the super over against the left-arm seamer. But one can only learn from such a bad day and I hope Babar Azam and the other players now take every game as a do-or-die game," Younis said.

Pakistan star **Haris Rauf** has been accused of tampering with the ball during the match on Thursday. Former South Africa pacer Rusty Theron, a member of the USA senior national cricket team at present, took to social media, tagging the International Cricket Council (ICC), making a serious accusation against Pakistan veteran speedster Rauf. —*PTI*

Akram hits out at Pak team

Legendary pacer Wasim Akram has lambasted Pakistan for their "pathetic performance" against the USA while going down in the Super Over and said it will be tough for Babar Azam's side to progress to the T20 World Cup knock-outs.

FRENCH OPEN

Carlos Alcaraz PHOTO: X/@ROLANDGARROS

Alcaraz defeats Sinner in five-set SF

PARIS, 7 JUNE

Carlos Alcaraz advanced to his first Roland Garros final on Friday when he defeated Italian Jannik Sinner 2-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 in a semi-final thriller in Paris.

In one of the most anticipated matches of the year, both players struggled to find their best level in the opening two sets. With the match all-square at one-set-all, Alcaraz looked to gain control when Sinner suffered with hand cramp at 2-2 in the third set. The Italian regularly shook out his hand between points and although his service speed dropped in the game, he saved four break points to survive on serve before he received treatment at 3-2.

Sinner came out firing on the resumption to break Alcaraz immediately and held firm on serve to move ahead. Alcaraz refused to surrender in the fourth, though, with both players striking the ball with clean and effortless timing. With little to separate them, the World No. 3 Alcaraz found more quality and intensity in his play at the end of the fourth set to win it and force a decider.

The 21-year-old then produced moments of magic in an absorbing fifth set, breaking Sinner's serve early with a fierce forehand winner. Alcaraz put his foot down from that moment and refused to let Sinner back in, sealing a mammoth victory on his third match point after four hours and 10 minutes.

20 Years Later, No Federer, Djokovic Or Nadal In French Open Men's Singles Final

Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic were eliminated from the French Open 2024 early, though due to different reasons, as the tournament stares at the first final in the men's singles category that would not feature either of the two legends since 2009. Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner, Casper Ruud, and Alexander Zverev are set to battle it out for the two final spots, bringing forth the 'gen-next' of men's tennis

Even in 2009, when neither Djokovic nor Nadal made it to the men's singles final, it was the OG Roger Federer who took on Robert Soderling in the summit clash. Nadal had reached the final on all of the previous four occasions, with the last French Open final without him, Federer, and Djokovic being the 2004 event where Gaston Gaudio had beaten Guillermo Coria.

—*AP*

KENJIGE, THE MAN BEHIND USA'S WIN OVER PAK

BENGALURU, 7 JUNE

Nosthush Kenjige PHOTO: X /@NOSTHUSH

Back in 2013, Nosthush Kenjige shacked up in his PG room close to the CBD here, sulking. Then a 22-year-old, Kenjige was nowhere near fulfilling his dream of becoming a professional cricketer.

A rigorous training at the Karnataka Institute of Cricket (KIOC) notwithstanding, Kenjige, one of the stars in USA's stunning win over Pakistan in the ongoing T20 World Cup, was not even close to breaking into the state cricketing eco-system.

Filled with disillusion, Kenjige, a US citizen by birth, returned to his mother nation armed with a degree in biotechnology from Dayanand Sagar College of Engineering. His passion for cricket was not extinct but remained dormant as Kenjige explored a career in medical equipment inspection in New York."It was a phase I was merely floating around without many aims. But a year or so later, I joined Columbia Cricket Club in NY, and that sort of reignited my desire to pursue cricket," said Kenjige, who was here on a personal visit a few months back.Irfan Sait, his early coach at the KIOC, said Kenjige made a timely return to the USA.

"He was talented for sure. He used to put in a lot of hard work at the Nets and played in the state league too. —*PTI*

Lakshya bows out of Indonesia Open

JAKARTA, 7 JUNE

India's challenge ended at the Indonesia Open Super 1000 tournament with star shuttler Lakshya Sen bowing out in the quarterfinals of the men's singles event here on Friday.

Sen, ranked 14th in the world, fought hard before going down 22-24 18-21 against world no. 5 Anders Antonsen of Denmark in a match that lasted one hour and one minute. Antonsen now enjoys a 3-2 head-to-head record against the Indians.

It was a see-saw battle between Sen and Antonsen in the first game which the Dane pocketed in 32 minutes.

There was nothing to separate the two shuttlers till the end as both matched each other before Antonsen had the last laugh.

Antonsen took an early 4-0 lead but a determined Sen fought hard to equal the scores at 5-5 and then extended it to 15-11.

—*PTI*

Lewis Hamilton says cars are still too heavy

PARIS, 7 JUNE

Lewis Hamilton PHOTO: @LEWISHAMILTON

Lewis Hamilton on Thursday welcomed Formula One's plan for lighter more agile cars, but believes the sport's ruling body has not gone far enough in reducing their weight.

The seven-time champion said it was a "step in the right direction" as he responded to questions about the planned new regulations to be used from 2026 at a news conference on the eve of this weekend's Canadian Grand Prix. "It's only 30 kilos (66 lbs) so it's going in the right direction but it's still heavy," Hamilton said. "So, I mean I've only just seen what you've all seen this morning.

"I don't have huge thoughts on it just yet, but I have spoken to some drivers who have driven it on a sim (simulator), as I haven't driven it on the sim, and they said it's pretty slow.

"So, we will see whether it's the right direction or not."

The Mercedes driver, who has won in Canada a record seven times, shared with Ferrari great Michael Schumacher, added some praise for the sport's impending move towards sustainable fuels.

"I think in terms of sustainability on the PU (power unit) side, it's a bold step and in the right direction," he said. —*AP*

Lewandowski returns to Germany for Euro 2024

LONDON, 7 JUNE

Robert Lewandowski PHOTO: X / @_RL9

Robert Lewandowski is relishing a "sentimental" return for Euro 2024 to Germany where he enjoyed an illustrious playing career before moving to Barcelona. The 35-year-old Polish striker left a deep impression first at Borussia Dortmund and then at Bayern Munich, having won ten Bundesliga titles between 2010 and 2022. Lewandowski, who also won the Champions League with Bayern in 2020, managed a whopping 312 goals in 384 Bundesliga games to become the competition's second-highest scorer ever after Bayern legend Gerd Mueller.

He is also the joint record holder of seven Bundesliga top scorer awards alongside Mueller.

"For me, it is already sentimental, you could say a return to the country where I spent many years, where I lived, where I also played in these stadiums," Lewandowski told Polish TV channel TVN.

He added he would be coming "with a positive attitude and with a smile on my face and also with such appreciation of where I am not just in life, also in my career".

But Poland will face a tough task in Germany after clinching a Euro spot by a hair's breadth as they edged Wales on penalties in the play-offs.

They have also faced challenges over a rapidly shifting leadership, having gone through five coaches in the last three years. —*AP*

NORWAY CHESS

Praggnanandhaa loses to Caruana

STAVANGER, 7 JUNE

R Praggnanandhaa went down fighting against Fabiano Caruana PHOTO: X / @PRAGG_CHESS

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa went down fighting against Fabiano Caruana of the United States while world number one Magnus Carlsen inflicted an Armageddon defeat on France's Firouzja Alireza in the penultimate round of Norway Chess tournament here.

With 16 points in his bag, Carlsen stretched his lead to 1.5 points over nearest rival Hikaru Nakamura, who was in for a shock as World Champion Ding Liren, for once, did not blow his position away.

Praggnanandhaa, despite the loss against Caruana in Armageddon, is still third on 13 points, a full point ahead of Alireza. Caruana on 10.5 comes in next in standings ahead of Liren (6), who spoiled Nakamura's party.

In the women's section, R Vaishali succumbed to another loss at the hands of Tingjie Lei of China and was relegated to the fourth spot while Koneru Humpy went down to tournament leader Wenju Ju of China.

Wenjun Ju of China strengthened her claim for the title by moving to 16 points.

Tingjie Lei and Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine follow her 1.5 points behind while Vaishali on 11.5 is a distant fourth ahead of Humpy who is on nine points. Veteran Swede Pia Cramling is last spot with 6.5 points in her kitty.

Vaishali was the only one to go down in the Classical game itself while all the other matches saw an Armageddon battle following a draw in normal games.

The English opening does not sound like a menacing choice but Tingjie took advantage with the slightly favourable colour early in the opening as Vaishali's pawn structure became a bit dented.

Picking out a pawn on the queen's side, the Chinese capitalized on her better-placed rook to invade the seventh rank and it was soon curtains for the Indian in just 28 moves.

Humpy had her last chance but could not make most of it as white against Wenjun Ju.

The Chinese equalized at ease in the early middle game as black in the Ragozine defense and drew comfortably in the ensuing rook and pawns endgame.

Humpy decided to go all-in in the Armageddon but the plan boomeranged as Wenjun found a tactical skirmish to win a rook in the middle game. The game lasted 41 moves.

—*PTI*